











*Islam and the Arabs*



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*Islam and  
the Arabs*



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*With profound respect  
this book is dedicated*

*to*

*His Majesty*

**MOHAMMED V**

*King of Morocco*



## PREFACE

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NEITHER Islam nor the Arab have been treated over-generously by Western authors. Yet their importance hardly needs emphasizing at a time when even a cursory glance at a newspaper reveals how much the future of the Western world is bound up with that of the Near East—the cradle of both Islam and Arabism. Though the day-to-day impact of the Near East is very far-reaching, far greater significance attaches to Islam in general and to Islamic (or Arabian) civilization in particular. Western civilization—from philosophy and mathematics to medicine and agriculture—owes so much to that civilization that unless we have some knowledge of the latter we must fail to comprehend the former.

There are some excellent books on our subject available in English. Some of them, however, are too detailed for the general reader while others are too brief or not sufficiently comprehensive to satisfy the needs of a reader who, without aiming at specialization, is nevertheless eager to gain a fairly rounded image of Islam and the Arabs. The present volume is designed primarily for such a reader, but also for university students. Here again it is not the potential specialist who is to be served, but rather the student who, though not an Arabic scholar, requires a textbook that is both far-reaching and succinct. Thus I have considered the demands not only of students of history or political science but also those interested in philosophy, science and art. An attempt has been made to meet the needs of students by the inclusion of special tables at the end of each chapter. At a glance, these tables provide a clear compendium of the most important names, dates, facts or terms discussed in the preceding chapter.

I have embarked upon the present book at the request of my own graduate students, and some of its material is based upon my lectures in class. In adapting and reshaping that material for the many different purposes of a book I was greatly assisted by some of my senior students

who, in fact, did much of the 'heavy' work, especially in the earlier chapters. Without their help this volume would probably never have seen the light of day. I wish particularly to thank Robert Bahnsen, PH.D., Robert Wagner, PH.D., and Edward A. Raleigh, M.A.

The present volume deals specifically with the Arab parts of the Muslim world and does not include countries that though Muslim are not Arab. Only in its references to general Islamic matters, such as pertain to philosophy or the sciences, have non-Arabs, too, been considered. While the Arabs formed the core of the Arab Empire, and Arabic, the language of the Koran, became the chief binding force in Islamic civilization, many of the leading exponents of that civilization were non-Arabs. Moreover, some Arabs have always been Christian, and not all Muslims are Arabs. Nevertheless, in many instances it seems permissible to employ the terms 'Arab' and 'Muslim' as interchangeable.

Since this volume is designed primarily for the reader who has no Arabic, sources in that language have been omitted from the bibliography. It lists mainly books in English that should be available in the library of any major university or self-respecting city. Footnotes have been deliberately kept to a minimum, but, at the end of each chapter, one or two of the most useful books on the relevant chapters are given.

In the spelling of Arab names and terms I have accepted the forms that have become the most common ones in books in English.

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## CHAPTER 1

### ARABIA BEFORE THE PROPHET

---

EARLY Arab history is a mixture of fact and fantasy; a fate shared by the early histories of all peoples. The old Norse legends show a striking similarity to those of the ancient Arabs. Climate has lent support to the turn these legends have taken. While Swedish frost-giants were created by a 'warm influence' coming into contact with snow and ice, Arab jinn were made of pure fire unmixed by smoke.

Tradition tells us that Allah made the jinn two thousand years before He made Adam. Though invisible, they loved and married, begat children and died. In the beginning, all jinn were good, but long before the time of Adam they rebelled against their settled existence and tried to change the order of things. During the course of the revolt, one of the evil jinn, Iblis, gained great power and became the Satan of the Arab world. Iblis retained his power even after the angels of Allah had quelled the rebellion.

Jinn haunted ruins and dwelt in rivers and oceans. The Arab saw them in whirlwinds and waterspouts. The jinn's main abode, however, was a mysterious mountain called Kaf which, in the imagination of the Arab, was founded on an immense emerald. Indeed, this sparkling gem gave the azure tint to the sun's rays so often in evidence over desert regions.

Before the birth of Jesus, jinn were allowed to enter any of the seven heavens. Since then, they were excluded from the first three and, after the birth of Muhammad, they were forbidden the other four. Nevertheless, jinn continued to go as close to the lowest heaven as possible, and when an Arab saw a 'shooting star' he said that it was the angels chasing an inquisitive jinn from the 'pearly gates'.

The pagan Arabs practised polytheism. They worshipped nature, stones, angels and demons. Particular reverence was accorded the

three 'daughters of God', and various national, local and family idols. Each tribe gave allegiance to a special protector: one god to whom it turned in time of distress.

Our modern altars may have had their beginnings in the stone worship of the ancients. One stone still holds a revered spot in the Arab heart. This is the stone that fell from paradise at the fall of Adam. Pure white it was and housed in a temple built by Seth, Adam's son, until a great flood ravaged the land, destroyed the temple, and buried it under the mud and debris. Tradition relates that the stone remained hidden until Abraham sent his wife Hagar into the desert with their infant son Ishmael. One day, weakened by thirst, Hagar laid her baby on the sand to rest. His fitful thrashings uncovered a spring of clear water near the site of the lost relic. It is told that an angel descended from heaven and helped recover the sacred stone and that Ishmael rebuilt the holy house of Seth with the assistance of Abraham and the archangel Gabriel. This, in brief, is the story of the Kaaba,<sup>1</sup> holiest building in Islam.

Mecca, home of the Kaaba, has long held a prominent position in Arab life. Picture, if you will, the desert caravans moving sluggishly across the tortured miles, from oasis to oasis, towards this city, an important stopping place on the great spice route. Clouds of dust engulf camels and riders in a swath of grit. A fierce sun pounces with unbearable heat on the weary traders. Throbbing eyes gaze towards the shimmering horizon for the first sight of Arabia's richest metropolis. Parched throats echo the hope of succour it affords from the driving desert winds. Mecca gave balm to body and soul. Here a man could find good food, wine, and, for a small sum, his visit to the Kaaba, a pantheon with more than 365 idols, was assured. While Roman gold and Indian spices exchanged hands, Christianity, Judaism, Magism and idolatry exchanged minds.

Although idolatry was the prevailing religion in early Arabia, the idea of One Supreme God was not unknown to the Arabs. Jews and Christians, of course, professed monotheism and the Sabians recognized One God, but they associated many lesser deities with Him. The Magians believed in a good god, Ormuzd, and an evil god, Ahri-man. Each of these two gods was continually fighting for the possession of the world. All the Magian had to do to reconcile himself to

<sup>1</sup> The name Kaaba means 'cube' in Arabic, descriptive of the building's shape.

monotheism was to believe that Ahriman was the creature of Ormuzd in revolt against Him. Certainly an easier transition than that which had to be made by the idol-worshipping Greeks and Romans in accepting Christianity.

Now there dwelt in Mecca a god called Allah. He was the provider, the most powerful of all the local deities, the one to whom every Meccan turned in time of need. But, for all his power, Allah was a remote god. At the time of Muhammad, however, he was on the ascendancy. He had replaced the moon god as lord of the Kaaba although still relegated to an inferior position below various tribal idols and three powerful goddesses: al-Manat, goddess of fate, al-Lat, mother of the gods, and al-Uzza, the planet Venus.

Numerous Biblical references are made to the Arabs. Through Ishmael the Arabs look back to the same ancestor as the Jews. Both groups regard Adam, Noah and Abraham as their fathers. Job was an Arab; the 'kings' of the prophet Jeremiah may have been Arabian sheikhs; and the 'wise men of the east' who followed the star to Jerusalem were possibly Bedouins from the Arabian desert rather than Magi from Persia.

In 1255 B.C. the Hebrew tribes had stopped for a forty-year period in Sinai and the Nufud on their trek from Egypt to Palestine. Tradition recounts the marriage of Moses to an Arabian woman who worshipped an austere desert-god named Yahu, later called Jehovah. This Arabian woman instructed Moses in the ways of her god and may have started, thereby, a chain of events that links Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Shem, eldest son of Noah, gives his name to the term 'Semite', the assumption being that these people are his descendants. In scientific terms 'Semite' is applied to him who speaks a Semitic language. The Assyro-Babylonian, Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, Ethiopic and Arabic languages probably spring from a common tongue. The social institutions, religious practices, psychological traits and physical features of these peoples reveal impressive points of resemblance. It may be reasonably assumed that, in ages past, their ancestors formed one community, spoke the same language and occupied the same locale.

The peoples of ancient Arabia spoke many Semitic dialects. While

the Arabs of the north and south had written languages, those of the desert remained unlettered. In early times the languages of the south probably enjoyed the prestige associated with an advanced civilization but, as this civilization declined, the language of the north gained prominence and finally world renown; for this was the language of the Prophet Muhammad.

Poetic use of speech represented the only cultural asset of the early Arab tribe, and their poets held an honoured position in the community. It was thought that the fate of the tribe depended upon the poet's choice of words. He was the Arab propagandist, satirist, oracle and historian. His vitriolic attacks could blunt the enemy swords and raise the victory standards of his home encampment. Whatever sense of unity existed among the pagan tribes may be traced to language as expressed in poetry.

The Arab poet never tired of singing the praises of his tribe's hospitality, and, while competition for water and pasturage caused war, hospitality for the traveller was a necessity in his barren land. The poet came into his own at the numerous local fairs held throughout Arabia. In Amman, Hajar, Ukaj, and other cities, the best poems were hung out for all to see, if not to read. It was at these fairs that the political differences among the tribes were accentuated.

There was, and is, little tillable land in Arabia. The Arab was therefore inept at farming. He was primarily a herdsman and a trader. The Bedouin, or desert nomad, personifies the best adaptation of human life to its environment; he does not wander aimlessly across the desert wastes but seeks grass for his herds wherever it might grow.

The clan, the basic element in Bedouin society, has lasted throughout the period of empire and exists down to the present day. Usually the senior member of the clan is chief and all members of the clan swear allegiance to him. A number of clans make up a tribe. An Arab tribal leader, the sheikh, is chosen by a council of clan chiefs and reigns by their sufferance; he is more a mediator and peacemaker than a ruler. Because desert society levels all men to the personal worth of the individual, each Arab meets his sheikh on equal footing.

The desert Arab built his freedom on the absence of restraints in personal affairs. A warrior had recourse to the sword in avenging

injuries. This 'eye for an eye' justice often led to blood feuds which sometimes were carried on for years.

Arab tribes demanded unconditional loyalty. The worst thing that could happen to a desert Arab was loss of tribal affiliation, a loss that led to complete ostracism by his kin. Entry into another tribe was the only salvation. Hereditary rights and rank had no place among the Bedouins. However, even in earliest times, in Mecca and Medina, the tribal structure evolved into aristocratic government.

Dates and milk were the chief staples of the Bedouin's diet. The camel was his 'staff of life'. The multiplicity of uses to which he put this beast was astounding: it provided him with means of transportation and with food; its hair was used for the making of tents and clothes; and its urine for that of medicine, hairdressing, and as a skin lotion for protection from the sun.

Only scattered fragments of ancient Arabia exist in archaeological findings. A few Palaeolithic and Neolithic sites show occupation from the Old Stone Age. Prehistoric skeletal remains suggest at least three racial stocks: Negroid, Armenoid and Mediterranean.

Historians place the home of the Semites on the Arabian Peninsula. The argument for immigration by civilized peoples lacks substance, and is, in general, opposed to the trend of cultures in world history. There is no evidence to support the theory of retrogression from agriculture to herd culture or from settler to nomad. On the contrary, it is reasonable to assume that nomadic Semites emigrated from Arabia as population increased and food became scarce. We have, in fact, documentation of a number of these emigrations dating from 3500 B.C. In that year one Semitic group amalgamated with the native Hamitic population of Egypt and another engulfed the Sumerian civilization of Mesopotamia to give us the Babylonians of a later era. A thousand years later another major migration carried the Amorites from Arabia into Syria. These were the Phoenicians of Greek history. Between 1500 and 1200 B.C., a third exodus introduced the Aramaeans into the areas around Damascus. As Canaanites, Hebrews and Aramaeans, in Phoenicia, Palestine and Syria, the desert peoples mingled with the native races.

Egypt's interest in the Arabian Peninsula may be traced back five thousand years. In 3000 B.C., a small contingent of Egyptians set up

mining operations for copper and turquoise at Yathrib (Medina). A campaign of Alexander the Great against Babylonia helped open the peninsula to trade. His successors in Egypt, the Ptolemies, encouraged trade on the Red Sea and opened trading ports on the African and Arabian coasts.

The first positive reference to the Arabians extant occurs in an inscription of the Assyrian, Shalmaneser III, who speaks of the capture of a thousand camels from Gindibu, the Arabian, in 854 B.C. There is little doubt that civilizations flourished on the peninsula long before that time, particularly in the south where a favourable climate and adequate rainfall combined to make it 'Happy Arabia', the 'Arabia Felix' of the Romans. The barren central desert provided a line of demarcation, a curtain of sand, drawn between the cultures of north and south.

Four names of southern peoples have come down to us. The Minaeans were probably the oldest group, followed by the Sabaeans, Qatabanis and Hadhramantis. Of these the Sabaeans were the most famous. Their principal city, Saba, showed a high degree of political organization. Here was a kingdom built by powerful aristocratic families but with no strong central administration. The legendary Queen of Saba (Sheba) may have come from here, although the Jewish historian Josephus (born A.D. 37) points out the existence of Saba in Africa which may have been her home. She is reported to have visited Solomon in Jerusalem with a complete retinue of soldiers and courtiers,<sup>1</sup> no mean feat in an era of unpaved highways and no hotels.

The fate of these southern civilizations is unknown; their decline unrecorded by history. Classical writers speak of the peoples of the south-west as Himyarites, a generic designation for related cultures of the area. By A.D. 350, Yemen and Himyar were colonies of Abyssinia. For over two hundred years Abyssinia retained a precarious grip over them. Frequent uprisings among the natives weakened the hold of Abyssinia, and the rising might of Byzantium hastened its fall. Byzantine legions brought Christianity to Abyssinia, and the Abyssinians—into South Arabia. Religion became a 'political football' in this southern arena. Judaism gained many adherents among the people, more as a political protest against their Christian masters than from any deep-rooted religious convictions.

<sup>1</sup> Koran, Sura XXVII.



Jewish colonies had already existed in the south, and were well-established by the time of the Abyssinian invasion. They were, however, numerically weak, and offered little threat to the government until the advent of Christianity. Then their power became so great that it is possible that the last abortive Abyssinian military expedition may have been sent specifically to avenge Jewish mistreatment of the Christian population and to break the sway of Judaism in the region.

Meanwhile, a second world power, Persia, threatened the dominance of Byzantium in South Arabia. In the fourth century A.D., the Persians had occupied Oman and had extended their influence westward without difficulty. The history of all Arabia in the few centuries preceding Muhammad is a story of the struggle between East and West, Persia and Byzantium: the five-hundred-year contest between two giants with pygmy Arabia in the middle. The effect of this conflict was relatively slight upon the south. Its full effect was felt in the north, where both powers established 'buffer states' in Arab territory. Neither Rome, predecessor of Byzantium, nor Persia made an extended successful penetration across the Euphrates, and each needed a 'buffer' to hold its territories intact and to repel the sporadic raids of the desert nomads.

The Nabataeans, originally from Transjordan, founded the first settled Arab civilization in the north. For a time during the Hellenistic period, their capital, Petra, controlled the caravan trade between north and south and became famous enough to be mentioned in non-Arab history. The first fixed date in Nabataean chronology is 312 B.C., when an attack by Antigonos, one of Alexander's successors, was repulsed.<sup>1</sup> Petra already boasted heavy fortifications and showed a high degree of civilization affirmed, as this was, by widespread irrigation, by impressive temples carved out of solid rock, and by a pottery distinguished by great beauty.

The Nabataean civilization was basically Arabian, retaining its tribal characteristics and Arabic speech despite its close association with Rome. For over a hundred years, Petra prospered under Roman tutelage. But after the conquest of Mesopotamia by Persia, the trade routes shifted northward, and Petra lost its usefulness as a protector of Roman trade. In the second century A.D., Petra was incorporated into the Roman Empire, becoming *Provincia Arabia*.

<sup>1</sup> Diodorus, Book II, Chap. 48, pp. 6-7.

Palmyra, a city founded near an oasis in the Syrian desert by a few Arabian tribes, stood astride the new northern trade route. Early in the Christian era the inhabitants of Palmyra had acknowledged the sovereignty of Rome and had received a subsidy for their support. As trade increased, the city's merchants prospered and achieved some measure of political prestige in the process. A war between Rome and Persia resulted in the appointment of a Palmyrene chief as vice-emperor over Egypt, Syria, North Arabia and possibly Armenia. Upon the death of the chief, Zenobia, his widow, took the title 'Queen of the East' and defied Roman domination. Thinking herself secure in her isolated desert region and underestimating the strength of her Roman masters, Zenobia launched an aggressive rebellion that pushed the Palmyrene banner almost to the borders of Byzantium. The Roman Emperor, Aurelian, stirred out of his lethargy by this threat to his territory, gathered his forces and destroyed Palmyra in a series of hard-fought battles. Zenobia was captured, taken to Rome, and marched through the streets in golden chains manacled to the chariot of the victorious Emperor. Thus ended the brief but startling sway of Palmyra over much of the Middle East.

As the sun of Palmyra sank below the horizon, a South Arabian tribe, the Qahtanis of Yemen, was working its way northward. One branch of the tribe, the Ghassan, founded a kingdom near the site of modern Damascus. Under the dominion of Byzantium they achieved power and wealth in the role of a 'buffer state' and adopted the Christianity of their rulers. In A.D. 195, another branch, the Lakhmids, established the kingdom of Hira near the ruins of ancient Babylonia. While serving as a 'buffer' for Persia, many of its people remained pagan under the non-proselytizing policy of Persian Zoroastrianism.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless some important elements among the Lakhmids became Nestorian Christians.

In the sixth century A.D., Byzantium and Persia, weak and worn out by centuries of struggle, reduced their subsidies to Ghassan and Hira, and these two states underwent a rapid decline. As the Byzantine and Persian Empires retrenched, a power vacuum was created between them that was to last for a hundred years. The Arabs returned to their primitive ways.

<sup>1</sup> A religion of fire-worship; the exclusive, state-controlled, religion of Persia whose origin may be traced to the worship of the sun.

## ARABIA BEFORE THE PROPHET

Meanwhile the seed of monotheism had been sown all along the Arabian Peninsula. Judaism had made converts in the north and south, and Byzantine influence was felt from Yemen to Syria. Christian and Jewish traders exchanged religious ideas with pagan Arabs along the caravan routes. Mecca enjoyed a rising prestige among the Arab cities, and Allah, lord of the Kaaba, was rising with it. The time was ripe for a religious revival.

Now, during the life of Abd al Muttalib, there ruled in Yemen a viceroy of the Prince of Abyssinia whose name was Abraha. It is written that this Christian viceroy set out with an imposing force to destroy the Kaaba. An elephant in the Abyssinian train struck terror in the hearts of the Arabs and they fled to the hills, leaving the Kaaba to the protection of Allah. A plague decimated the invading army and saved Mecca from destruction.<sup>1</sup>

Tradition tells us that in the 'Year of the Elephant' was born Muhammad, the Prophet, to Abdullah, son of Muttalib.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Hitti, Philip K.: *History of the Arabs*. New York, 1956.  
Atiyah, Edward: *The Arabs*. Baltimore, 1955.

<sup>1</sup> Koran, Sura XCIV, speaks of small stones cast down by birds to rout the invading hosts. Modern historians surmise the plague was actually smallpox, and liken the hard pustules of that disease to the stones of the tradition.

# ISLAM AND THE ARABS

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF ARABIA BEFORE ISLAM

DATES	CHIEF EVENTS OF THE ARAB WORLD	CHIEF WORLD EVENTS
4000-3000 B.C.	First Semitic migration from the Arabian Peninsula to Egypt and Mesopotamia (3500 B.C.).	Calendar with a solar year of 365 days introduced in Egypt (4241-2781 B.C.). Egyptian colony established at Yathrib (Medina) to mine copper and turquoise (3000 B.C.).
2900-2000 B.C.	Second major Semitic migration from Arabian Peninsula to Syria (2500 B.C.).	Menes unites Upper and Lower Egypt into one kingdom (2900-2400 B.C.). Pyramids at Gizeh erected by Cheops, Chephron and Mycerinus (2500-2400 B.C.). Unification of Crete with dynasties at Cnossus and Phaestus (2000 B.C.).
1900-500 B.C.	Third Semitic migration from Arabian Peninsula to the areas around Damascus (1500 B.C.). Moses marries an Arabian woman (1255 B.C.). Minaean and Sabaean kingdoms well established in South Arabia (1000 B.C.).	Amenophis IV (Ikhnaton) envisions a single god for the whole world (1375-1358 B.C.). Sack of Troy by the Achaeans (1185 B.C.). Shalmaneser ascends the throne of Assyria (859 B.C.). Rise of Sparta. Age of Homer in Greece (800 B.C.).  Traditional date for the reign of Romulus, first Roman king (753 B.C.). Sargon ascends the Assyrian throne (722 B.C.). Colonization of Byzantium (669 B.C.). Rise of Athens (600 B.C.). Rout of the Egyptians, in their attempted reconquest of the Near East, by Nebuchadnezzar, Crown Prince of Babylon (605 B.C.). Temple of Diana at Ephesus by Ctesiphon, one of the wonders of the ancient world, is begun (544 B.C.). Persians conquer Egypt (525 B.C.). Founding of the Republic of Rome (509 B.C.).

# ARABIA BEFORE THE PROPHET

DATES	CHIEF EVENTS OF THE ARAB WORLD	CHIEF WORLD EVENTS
500 B.C.– 100 A.D.	Antigonus, one of Alexander's generals, unsuccessfully attacks the Arab city of Petra (312 B.C.).	Campaign of Thermopylae. Persians destroy Athens (480 B.C.). Alexander the Great, of Macedonia, occupies Egypt and founds the city of Alexandria (332 B.C.). Hannibal crosses the Alps (218 B.C.). Carthage destroyed by Rome (146 B.C.). Cleopatra VII seeks to establish a Hellenistic monarchy in Egypt (47–30 B.C.). Caesar conquers Gaul (58–51 B.C.).
A.D. 100– 399	Petra becomes a Roman Province (A.D. 105). Odenathus, Arab prince of Palmyra, defeats the Persians and seizes Mesopotamia and Syria (A.D. 260–263). Fall of Palmyra. Zenobia, Arab 'Queen of the East', is taken to Rome in chains (A.D. 272). Yemen and Himyar are colonies of Abyssinia (A.D. 350).	Ardashir I sets up a strong centralized state in Persia (A.D. 226–240). Diocletian reorganizes the Roman Empire (A.D. 284). Persian power reaches its zenith under Shapur II (A.D. 309–379). Constantine reunites the Roman Empire (A.D. 324–337). Constantinople built on the site of ancient Byzantium (A.D. 330).
A.D. 400– 627	Petra conquered by the Persians (A.D. 540). Petra recaptured by the Romans (A.D. 550). Abyssinians driven out of southern Arabia by the Persians. South Arabia becomes a Persian province (A.D. 576).	Alaric sacks Rome (A.D. 410). Attila invades Italy (A.D. 452). Persians invade Syria and attack Antioch (A.D. 540–562). Heraclius, Roman Emperor, defeats the Persians at Nineveh (A.D. 627).

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PROPHET, THE KORAN AND ISLAM

---

**A**BOUT Muhammad's early life little is accurately known. This lack of information is not uncommon in the recorded history of many of the world's great, and it is not until Muhammad began to proclaim the message of Islam that the attested facts of his life become numerous. The year of his birth is said to be A.D. 570, but that date is anything but definite. His father Abdullah died before Muhammad was born, and his mother died a few years after his birth. As an orphan without siblings, he was raised by his grandfather and then by an uncle, spending long hours alone in Mecca or in the surrounding countryside tending the herds. One can easily imagine the loneliness experienced by the sensitive youth, and the effect that this must have had on his mental make-up. His later revelations were not given to him as though in a vacuum, but within an atmosphere of inevitable introspection and spiritual questioning—the concomitant of a boy's existence without parents, brothers or sisters.

In his early twenties Muhammad was employed by a wealthy widow named Khadijah, who used his services as a caravan leader in her commercial enterprises. As a result of his conscientious services and undoubtedly attracted by his sincerity, his employer, although some twenty years his senior, became his wife. Khadijah may not have been as prosperous as traditions state, but she was able to make her husband independent and to give him the time that he needed for trading ventures and, more important, for serious thought.

Traditional accounts state that at the age of forty Muhammad had a vision in which the angel Gabriel began speaking to him.<sup>1</sup> This and some subsequent visions took place in a cave near Mecca where he was wont to meditate, away from the bustle of city life. At first

<sup>1</sup> W. Montgomery Watt: *Muhammad at Mecca*, p. 39. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953.

Muhammad was terrified by these visitations, fearing that Satan was appearing to him; but, encouraged by his wife, he soon came to believe that it was truly Allah's words that he heard. Muhammad spent much time in prayer and fasting, and it was under these circumstances that the revelations continued. At no time did Muhammad make assertions of his own divinity or of miraculous powers. On the contrary, he was careful to point out that he was merely the messenger that Allah used to bring the revelation to the people.

Muhammad was religious by nature and was evidently predisposed to the message of reform that he received in his visions. In addition to his spiritual nature he was essentially a practical man who knew the weaknesses and the strength of the Arab character, and he realized that the reforms that were necessary would have to be taught gradually to both undisciplined Bedouin and pagan townsmen. At the same time he had an uncompromising faith in the concept of one God—an idea that was not entirely new in Arabia—and an unflinching determination to eradicate every vestige of idolatry that was rife among the pagan Arabs.

Muhammad's task was a formidable one, one that an impostor (as some early Western writers claimed he was) prompted by selfish motives, could hardly hope to accomplish by his own effort. The allegation that his periods of revelation were, in reality, epileptic seizures is palpably false; for in such an attack the victim is never coherent enough to voice passages as complex or as intellectually profound as are so many that form the Koran. The sincerity with which he undertook his task, the complete faith that his followers had in his revelations, and the test of centuries make it unlikely that Muhammad was guilty of any kind of deliberate deception. No deliberate 'religious' concoction even of an impostor of genius has ever survived. Islam has not only survived for over thirteen hundred years, but keeps gaining new adherents from year to year. History shows not a single example of an impostor whose message was responsible for the creation of one of the world's greatest empires and of one of the noblest civilizations.

Muhammad's task was to break down the strong tribal system that had been responsible for almost constant warfare and to substitute an allegiance to God that cut across family ties and petty hatreds. He had to introduce a universal law that yet could be found acceptable

by the lawless Arabs, and he had to impose discipline upon a society that thrived on tribal violence and blood vengeance for real or fancied wrongs. His problem was to replace humanity for cruelty, order for anarchy, and justice for sheer might.

For several years following his first revelations, Muhammad proclaimed his message to his close friends and relatives, among whom were Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, and Abu Bakr, Muhammad's successor. Not until a considerable number of converts had been gained did he preach in public. As a member of the Hashim clan of the Quraish tribe (the principal occupants of Mecca), he was entitled to protection, but his doctrine of one God posed a threat to the financial interests of the Quraish, dependent as they were on revenues from pagan pilgrimages to the idols of the Kaaba. Although his clan were not converted to his doctrine, they could not, as a matter of pride, submit to the coercion of the Quraish to outlaw Muhammad. Nevertheless, pressures became severe and, for their own protection, Muhammad sent the bulk of his converts (about six hundred people) to Abyssinia.

A turning point in Muhammad's life came in 620 when a group of pilgrims from Yathrib (later to be known as Medina) accepted his message of monotheism and spread the word of it in their own town. Two years later the Medinese returned, this time bearing with them an invitation for the Prophet to come to Medina. The *Hijra* (*Hegira*), as Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina is called, marks the beginning date of the Muslim calendar and the start of widespread conversion to the new teaching.<sup>1</sup>

For ten years the Meccans fed their hatred of Muhammad and his followers, and several battles had to be fought before the pagans would permit Muhammad to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. The last armed resistance of the Meccans ended in their complete surrender and in Muhammad's entrance into Mecca at the head of a

<sup>1</sup> Using the year of Salah al-Din's (Saladin's) death as an example, we can see the difference between the Muslim and the Christian calendars. According to the former, Salah al-Din died in 589 A.H. (after *Hijra*); by our calendar, the date was A.D. 1193. Since the Muslim year is based on a lunar calendar and therefore considerably shorter than our solar year, it is not possible to convert from the Christian year to the Muslim merely by subtracting 622 years. A complex table must be used as an aid.



large contingent of pilgrims from Medina. One of his first acts in Mecca was to purge the Kaaba of its many idols, preserving only the sacred black stone said to have been placed there by Abraham.

With the capitulation of the Meccans, the Bedouin tribes of Arabia began swearing allegiance to the Prophet and submitting to the precepts of the new religion as laid down in the Koran. Representatives from all over the Arabian Peninsula continued to pour into Mecca until all of Arabia was, at least nominally, following the teachings of Islam.

When Muhammad died in 632 the success of Islam completely vindicated the faith of Khadijah in the revelation that her husband had received, and the new monotheistic creed was on the road to spiritual and physical conquest unparalleled in human history.

The written form of the revelation that Muhammad received is, according to Muslim belief, recorded exactly as Allah transmitted it through Gabriel. The Prophet's friends and relatives recorded his words on any available surface, such as the shoulder bones of sheep or dried animal skins, but it was not until 651 under the leadership of Othman, the third successor of Muhammad, that all the fragments were compiled into one book.

The order of the compilation accounts in part for the difficulty which the Western reader experiences when reading the Koran. With the exception of the opening sura (chapter), which is very short, the remaining chapters are placed according to length—the longest ones first. Because the longer suras were those revealed during the last years of the Prophet's life in Medina and thus filled with details of government and law, the non-Muslim finds them somewhat tedious. It is the shorter chapters recorded in Mecca that are filled with religious fervour and that compel the attention and respect of the non-Muslim reader.

Because the arrangement of the suras is not chronological, one should not read the Koran as one reads the Christian Bible, starting with the first chapter and expecting to read a continuous flow of history and revelation. Judicious selection of certain of the shorter suras will make the reading of the Koran meaningful and interesting.

Because the job of translating the Koran in all of its rhythmic

power into another language requires the service of one who is a poet as well as a scholar, not until recently has there been a good rendering that has captured anything of the spirit of Muhammad's revelation. Many of the early translators were not only unable to retain the beauty of the Arabic but were also so filled with prejudices against Islam that their translations suffered from bias. However, even the best possible interpretation of the Koran in a written form is not able to retain the compelling cadence of the suras as they are chanted by the Muslims. It is only when the Westerner hears portions of the Koran recited in its original language that he comes to appreciate something of the grandeur and the power of its words.

Next to the Koran, the Muslims find guidance and inspiration in the collection of the *Sunna*, the sayings and the attested deeds of Muhammad. The *Hadith*, as this compilation is called, went through many editions, but the first and most reliable is that organized by Muhammad al-Bokhari in the ninth century.

Muhammad did not receive his revelations in a vacuum but in a pagan society that had many gods and religious practices, however debased. Thus we cannot fully understand the impact of Islam until we have looked into the religious climate in which the Prophet found himself. The pre-Islamic religious life of the Arab was divided in the same way as was the social system—nomadic customs in contrast to the customs of the townsman.

Among the early nomads various relationships with spirits comprised the bulk of religious experience. At first these spirits were thought of as inhabitants of trees and rocks and as indentifiable entities. As the nomads contacted the settled tribes, they began attributing certain characteristics and names to the spirits until they had worked out an elementary pantheon. Mana, the spirit of doom, or Gadd, the bringer of good luck, were just two of the many beings to which the nomad made sacrifices. The tribes finally developed some special spirit which they identified with themselves—even going so far as to carry their choice in an ark-like tent reminiscent of that of Hebrew custom.

This veneration and fear of a particular spirit developed into an expression of tribal unity. The spirit became a symbol of the tribal identity, and following the rules of the cult was equivalent to political loyalty to the group. As a result of this feeling, apostasy was con-

sidered treason. A form of this sentiment has been carried over into much of the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup>

As contact with the outside world increased, idol worship crept into the vague animism of the nomads. Finally the identification of a certain spirit with a particular tribe began breaking down. Tribal lines were crossed by such gods as Manat, Uzza and Allat—deities that were worshipped by townspeople as well as by nomads. The people of the urban centres, with their greater economic wealth, were able to systematize the worship of the gods. They built temples and employed a priest class that soon dominated the religious life of the people. Mecca, with its idol-filled Kaaba, was an example of the well-organized worship that became the focus of whatever spiritual life the Arab enjoyed.

From pagan Arabia Islam adopted certain customs, but purified them from any idolatrous taint. The pilgrimage to Mecca was continued, but only after Muhammad had destroyed the hundreds of idols that dominated the Kaaba. Even the statues of Abraham and Ishmael, those traditional builders of the shrine, were eliminated. The legendary Sabaeans of southern Arabia had practised fasting and had forbidden the use of certain foods. These customs were utilized in Islam but directed toward more exalted ends than mere appeasement of heathen gods.

The pagans evidently had some vague notion of a future life beyond the grave, for they made it a practice to tie a camel to its master's tomb so that the mount could be used in the after-life. While Muhammad in no way derived his complete doctrine of resurrection from this idea, the concept was not a revolutionary one to the Arabs.

In addition to the pagan elements in the Arabian peninsula, both Judaism and Christianity influenced pre-Islamic thought. The religious influence of the Jews on the Arabs was considerable, especially on those who were disillusioned with the rampant idolatry. Besides the monotheism of the Jews, their ritual, too, had some effect on the Arabs. Washing before prayers and praying toward Jerusalem were forms that found their way into Islamic observances. The latter custom was changed to a focus on Mecca when the Jews refused to

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lewis: *The Arabs in History*, p. 30. London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1950.

hail Muhammad as a prophet. Many of the attributes of God that are basic to Islamic belief were equally important to the Jew. Also many of the moral laws found in the books of Moses and the later prophets are included in Muslim practice. These similarities do not imply to the Muslim that there was any borrowing from Judaism; rather, it bears out Muhammad's contention that he was transmitting God's revelation that had been distorted in the past.

Even though Christianity was the religion of many of the invaders of the Arabian peninsula and thus somewhat unpopular, many Arabs had become Christians. The positive influence that the Christian message should have had was offset by the constant bickering between groups that purported to have exclusive interpretations of the truth. Even though this lamentable state of affairs was the rule rather than the isolated case, Christianity was strong enough to gain many converts—some for political reasons but many others in a true spirit of belief. However, just as Muhammad rejected the tribal concept of God as stressed in Judaism, he also repudiated the Christian dogma of the Trinity—the latter word being tantamount to blasphemy to the Muslims.

A major point of Christian doctrine that made a great impression on the Arabs was the insistence on a coming day of judgment. Jewish theology is almost silent on the hereafter, and it remained for the Christians to systematize eschatology. Next in importance to the concept of God, Islam emphasized the future life of the believer in heaven and the fate of the infidel in hell. Certainly many pagans first learned of these ideas from their Christian Arab neighbours and were more than ready to accept Muhammad's teachings along similar lines. Just how familiar the Prophet was with the details of Judaism and Christianity is only a matter of conjecture. However, many adherents of these groups were in and around Mecca and Medina, and the religious atmosphere was permeated with their ideas. There was even a pagan group known as Hanifs who were dissatisfied with pagan idolatry but were unwilling to accept either of the existing monotheistic religions. With all of this seething interest in religion, it is evident that the time was ripe for the coming of another prophet—the 'Seal of the Prophets'.

It was in this atmosphere, charged with an all-embracing distrust of outsiders, that Muhammad proclaimed a doctrine that made all

believers more than brothers. It was the task of Islam to transform the fierce tribal code of honour and unity into an organized religious doctrine that would include both the individualistic Bedouin and the settled farmer and townsman. This doctrine of the equality of man before God and the unity that the believers in Allah had, made a profound change in the thinking and in the conduct of the Arab, who up to this time had little respect for anyone outside of his tribal group. There was a genuine expression of equality in the early days of Islam that was evidenced by the democratic way the first successors of Muhammad were chosen, the lack of racial distinction or caste system.

When we think of a follower of the Buddha, the name Buddhist comes to mind, or when a believer in Christ is named, he is called a Christian. Similarly, many writers who should know better have given the name Muhammadans to the Muslims. This is particularly offensive to the Muslim as it implies that he worships or deifies the Prophet as Christians do Christ.

Islam is a term used to identify the system of belief that is based on the Koran, and comes from the Arabic word *aslama* (submit) as used in many of its suras (chapters).<sup>1</sup> The word *Islam* occurs in several suras to indicate the true religion, e.g. 'The religion with God is al-Islam' (Sura 3: 19), and 'This day have I . . . approved al-Islam for you as a religion' (Sura 3: 3). Islam can be said to mean 'submission to the will of God', or peace through that submission. *Muslim* is a noun based on this verb and means 'one who has submitted himself to God and thereby found peace'.

The doctrine of God occupies the major portion of Muslim theology. It has been an area in which basic differences of opinion have separated Muslim theologians and teachers from the time of the Prophet to the present. Just what is the character of God as seen by the Muslim? This question must be discussed in some detail, but space limitations make some over-simplifications and generalizations unavoidable.

In its essence the Koranic concept of God is simplicity itself as shown by such suras as 20: 7 and 16: 53: 'God—there is no God but He', and 'For God hath said, "Take not to yourselves two Gods, for He is one God"'. From these and other passages the Muslims have developed

<sup>1</sup> H. A. R. Gibb: *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 176. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953.

an absolutely inflexible concept of the unity of God; an idea that has welded together all elements, orthodox or heterodox, in complete agreement on this point. The power of the Koran's monotheistic doctrine as witnessed by the tremendous hold that this idea has on the Muslim certainly matched its counterpart among the Jews. Whether Muhammad received the idea through divine inspiration or from Jewish Arabs is not our problem. The fact is that the concept marked a tremendous stride for one Arab to take, surrounded as he was by the hundreds of gods that filled the Kaaba.

The Koran emphasizes that there is no sin so heinous as a belief that God has associates, for it says in Sura 4: 51, 'Verily, God will not forgive the union of other gods with Himself', and, 'other than this will He forgive'. The orthodox view may be summed up by the statement, 'God is one God, Single, One, Eternal; He has taken to Himself no wife nor child'.<sup>1</sup> In this and similar statements we see an obvious denial of the Christian trinitarian concept of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This condemnation of *shirk*, attributing an associate to God, together with the idea of God's unlimited power, combine to form the major themes of the Koran.

Looking now to this other thought concerning God—that of power—we see that to the Muslim, God is the creator of the universe and its inhabitants. God's power is much more important to the Muslim than the love of God. It is certainly understandable that to the Arab, living, as he did, in harsh and difficult surroundings, the idea of power and might of God was much more attractive than love. This is especially so when we realize that the word *love* to the Arab has a physical connotation with strong sexual concomitants. Such phrases in the Koran as 'Truly God has power over all things', or 'God, the Almighty', and again 'O God, possessor of all power' are repeated in essence in many places. These concepts form an integral part of Islam.

To the orthodox Muslim the idea that God is all-powerful did not extend only to the control of the physical world but also the actions of man. One of the major points of disagreement with the orthodox doctrine came at this juncture—man's free will contrasted with his fore-ordained path through life. The dissenters stated that God must

<sup>1</sup> J. N. D. Anderson: *The World's Religions*, p. 63. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953.

act in justice and always do what is right for His creations, allowing them to determine their own destiny. The orthodox contended that all man's actions are predestined from eternity and inscribed on a 'Preserved Tablet'.<sup>1</sup> If there is any solution to this seeming contradiction, it may be found in the answer of one of the Muslim philosophers, Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), who said that although God may dictate all of man's actions, we should act as if He did not. We should not depend slavishly on providence without exercising our own intellect.

Sura 7: 177–8 presents the orthodox viewpoint, 'Whomsoever God guides he is rightly guided, and who He leads astray, they are the losers'. The same sura points out that many men and jinn (spirits) have been created for hell. These and similar phrases were sometimes over-emphasized—an emphasis which many liberal thinkers in Islam deplored. Whatever the Koran meant in this regard, some type of control of man's actions by God seems to be an integral part of conservative Muslim thought.

Another concept of God that was important to Muhammad and is to the majority of Muslims is that God is everywhere—not limited to any particular area, space, or time. Two suras give credence to this belief when they state '... whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God; God is all-embracing', and '... surely the Lord encompasses men' (Suras 2: 109 and 17: 62). Even with all of this emphasis, Muhammad thought of God as an entity and not as some amorphous mass—a concept which kept him from the error of pantheism.

A personal God is an important part of Islamic thinking. This is reflected by the mystic Rumi who said 'Yet am I [God] contained in the believer's heart'.<sup>2</sup> Sura 38: 72 says that God breathed His spirit into man. This leads the Muslim to feel the personality and the presence of God in the life of man. The concept that God is approachable is continued in other suras that adjure the reader to be humble and to draw near to God. In a similar way the Koran states that God is the fourth in a meeting of three (Sura 58: 8). He is so close that the worshipper does not need to raise his voice when praying, for 'We know what his soul whispers within him, and We are nearer to him than the jugular vein' (Sura 50: 17). This and the preceding selections indicate that the Muslims' concept of God is more personal than one would gather from a cursory perusal of their literature.

<sup>1</sup> J. N. D. Anderson: *The World's Religions*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Much has been said concerning God's attributes as listed in the Koran as to whether they are one with God or other than God. On one side, the feeling seems to be that if God has characteristics, then He is no longer unity but a series of combined attributes. The orthodox maintain that the attributes of God are neither identical with Him nor separate from His nature. They state that God has attributes which can be listed and discussed even if from a negative viewpoint. Thus it is possible to say, not that God is good, as this would limit Him to our conception of goodness, but that He is not evil as we are evil. Similarly, we can describe Him as not being limited as we are, or not being unjust, cruel, unmerciful, etc., as the human race is. Maybe we can take refuge in the words of Malik ibn-Anas (c. 713-795), an important figure in Islamic law, when he was discussing some of God's attributes, '... the fact is known, the manner is unknown, faith in it is necessary, enquiry about it is heresy'.<sup>1</sup>

Reference to the ninety-nine names of God will provide us with some idea as to what the orthodox hold important in their concept of His nature. The Koran gives us such pictures of God as the All-subtle, the All-aware, the All-mighty, the All-knowing, and many others. Each of these could be elaborated to complete the picture of God in Islam. The importance of these titles is brought out by the admonishment of the believer to make use of them, for Sura 6: 193 states, 'To God belong the names most beautiful; so call Him by them'.

Summarizing, we might say that, in Islam, there is a belief in God's oneness, His complete power, His omnipresence and omniscience, His personality and, of course, all of the characteristics enumerated in the 'ninety-nine most beautiful names'.

The main religious duties of the Muslim are sometimes called the 'five pillars of Islam'. This framework is made up of the statement of faith, the ritual of prayer, the giving of alms, observing the fast, and performing the pilgrimage. It is these five pillars which make up the practice of Islam for the average Muslim, and it is through their observance that he expects to escape the fate of the infidel. The declaration of faith is a simple one: 'There is no God but God' (*la*

<sup>1</sup> A. S. Tritton: *Islam—Belief and Practices*, p. 36. London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1954.



*ilaha illa-l-lah*). To the majority in Islam, the reciting of this formula makes one a true Muslim. Much of the power of Islam may be found in this simple yet vital creed that, in one blow, cuts away the dead wood of idolatry and affirms the unity of God. The grip that this short statement has on the Muslim is shown in the many ways it is included in daily conversation and devotion.

The second pillar of Islam is prayer. Tradition requires that the Muslim pray at least five times a day at prescribed hours and in a definite pattern of word and posture. The times for the ritual prayer is usually announced by the *muezzin* in the following words: 'God is most great. I testify that there is no god but Allah. I testify that Muhammad is God's apostle. Come to prayer. Come to security. God is most great.' In the morning he usually adds the admonishment that prayer is better than sleep. Whatever else the Muslim may say in his prayers, he always starts with the *Fatiha*, the opening sura of the Koran, which says:

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate  
Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being,  
the All-Merciful, the All-compassionate,  
the master of the Day of Doom.

Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succour  
Guide us in the straight path,  
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,  
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful,  
nor of those who are astray.<sup>1</sup>

The third pillar is the fast during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim year. During the daylight hours of the month, the Muslims abstain from all food, drink, tobacco and sexual intercourse. Daylight is judged as beginning when a white thread can be distinguished from a black thread, and ending when this is no longer possible. Because the lunar calendar of the Muslims causes the month of Ramadan to fall at different seasons, the fast is sometimes observed in summer. When this occurs in the hot Arab countries,

<sup>1</sup> Sura 1, from A. J. Arberry: *The Koran Interpreted*, p. 29. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1955.

it is a real trial of faith to refrain from food and water for the long daylight hours. One of the purposes of the fast seems to be for the rich to learn what it means to be hungry and thus to sympathize with the poor. The fast also developed self-control among a people who were by nature passionate and independently wilful.

A pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a Muslim's life is the fourth pillar of his faith. If at all possible, the faithful make the trek to the holy city at a specified time. When they are there, they don a simple, seamless garment and carry out an involved ritual for several days. Walking around the Kaaba, running between two small hills nearby, and making a twelve-mile trip to Mount Arafat make up some of the elements of the pilgrimage. Many of the customs connected with the ceremony are similar in form to pre-Islamic practices, but the purpose has changed to that of worship rather than propitiation. The *haj*, as the pilgrimage is called, has been a unifying force in Islam in which Muslims from such scattered places as China, Indonesia or Latin America join in an act of common worship.

The last of the minimum duties of a pious Muslim is payment of a religious tax. Muhammad, himself an orphan, felt the need for community support of the poor. To care for the indigent, the *zakat* was instituted. This usually amounted to 2½ per cent of an individual's capital, and was originally collected by state officials who in turn administered the fund. In more modern times the *zakat* has become a voluntary offering that is given in addition to any governmental tax.

It is in the foregoing pillars that we find a major reason for the strength of Islam. The mixture of moral reform and religious worship was eminently suited to the temperament and the needs of the Arabs. The very definiteness of the obligations appealed to the pagans wherever Islam found them. There was something extremely satisfying in knowing that one has obeyed the demands of one's creed. No matter how physically difficult those demands may be, they can be accomplished. As a result, the Muslim is rarely a frustrated worshipper who is never quite sure that he has met the requirements of his particular religious code.

How do the major tenets of Islam compare with those of Christianity? The following points of similarity need no elaboration. In both religions there is a reverence and respect for the prophets of the Old Testament and for the Biblical account of creation. Both groups

have similar views concerning the future life and the certainty of a coming judgment day. Concerning Christ, there is a surprising amount of agreement between Islam and Christianity. The Muslim joins with the Christian in affirming Christ's virgin birth, that He was sinless (a claim not made for Muhammad), that He performed many miracles including the raising of the dead, and that He is alive and in heaven with God.

The fundamental split between Islam and Christianity comes in their concept of God. The absolute unity of God is the basis upon which Islam is founded, but in Christianity this unity takes the form of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Islam is revelation from God in the Koran, but Christianity is the revelation of God through the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Consequently the earthly symbol of God to the Muslim is the Koran, but to the Christian the basic symbol is the elements of the Holy Communion which represent Christ and His sacrifice for the sins of the world.

To the Muslim, God is the Absorber who dominates all aspects of daily life. Social intercourse, family relationships, work, politics, mores, hygiene, and, in fact, all aspects of life are God's province. Islam is a social gospel in which the total welfare of the community is of prime importance. The individual as such almost disappears in the whole. Christians feel that God is the Redeemer, and individual salvation through faith in Jesus Christ plays the major role in God's relationship with His creations. In Islam the main emphasis is placed on God's power. In consequence the devout Muslim submits to Him unquestioningly. In Christianity it is the love of God rather than His power that is emphasized. So a Christian does not feel that submission is a requisite for salvation—rather belief and an acceptance of God's love are the necessary adjuncts to union with Him.

Islam was born of success and conquest, while Christianity faced several hundred years of severe persecution. The historical Christian emphasis on suffering and mortification of the flesh is almost entirely lacking in orthodox Islam. To a Muslim, the Christian dichotomy of flesh and spirit is unreasonable and, at best, unrealistic. Marriage is an example of the difference of opinion in this area. To a Muslim, the ceremony of marriage is a legal one with no air of sanctity about it. The Christian concept is a deeply spiritual one—an earthly picture

of the union of Christ with His Church. Consequently in Christendom sex is only legalized by the sacrament of marriage; in Islam love alone sanctifies sex.

Islam is essentially practical. The regulations laid down in the Koran are not inflexible but have been modified as circumstances necessitated. This policy is supported by many Muslims when they quote the Koranic statement that God wishes to make things easy for man. The Muslim finds it possible to fulfil the dictates of his religion and thus gain security and peace of mind.

Christian doctrine as laid down by Christ and the early apostles in the New Testament brooks no modification and must be followed. The deeply spiritual goal of Christianity of victory over weaknesses of the flesh is well nigh unattainable in this life; and if it were not for the love of God, a Christian's life would be a series of insurmountable frustrations. The Muslim can attain the ideal of his religion here on earth, but a Christian looks to union with Christ in the future as the culmination of his religious life.

The symbolism of the two religions re-emphasize their distinctly different philosophy. In the bowed form of the praying Muslim, in the cubical shape of the Kaaba, and in the domed rectangle of the mosque there is reflected the Islamic feeling of self-containment. The Muslim does not feel that God is 'up there' but rather is found within himself. Although many spiritual Christians feel that God is very close to them in the person of Jesus Christ, historically, Christian symbolism has expressed itself in a reaching out for external help. The supplicating folded hands are symbolized by the Gothic spire, pointing heavenward, not toward the suppliant himself.

The Koran seems to emphasize that the differences between the Christian and the Muslim are not those that make the difference between heaven and hell. Sura 5: 73 says, 'Surely they that believe, and those of Jewry, and the Sabians, and those Christians, whosoever believes in God and the last day, and works righteousness—no fear shall be on them neither shall they sorrow'. This indicates that devout Christians are equated, in accordance with Koranic teaching, with Muslims. The same sura, in verse 85, states that those who are the closest to the believers in love are the Christians—a sentiment which should somewhat alleviate whatever animosity a Muslim may hold toward a Christian. It is evident that on many important issues, Islam

and Christianity agree, but it is just as clear that there are also many points where the two take widely diverging paths.

Though no official formulation of the articles of Islamic faith has ever met with the approval of the majority of Muslims, the following statement attributed to Muhammad would seem to provide a simple creed with the essentials of Islam included in it: 'A Muslim must believe in God, and His Angels, and His Books, and His Messengers, and in the Last Day. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

A more comprehensive version of the creed can be found on Muslim tombstones:

He testifies that there is no god but God, that He has no partner, that Muhammad is His servant and His messenger, that the garden is true and the fire true, that he believes in His providence entirely, both what is good and bad. The Koran is the word of God, revealed, not created, good and bad both come from Him. God will be seen without doubt on the day of resurrection.

All that can be worshipped between His throne and the foundation of the earth, except His face, will perish; Islam is what He sent, religion is what He decreed, truth is what He said, justice is what He ordered.<sup>2</sup>

#### RECOMMENDED READING

Anderson, J. N. D.: *The World's Religions*. Grand Rapids, 1953.

Tritton, A. S.: *Islam—Belief and Practices*. London, 1951.

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> Tritton, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

## ISLAM AND THE ARABS

### CHRONOLOGY OF MUHAMMAD'S LIFE\*

c. A.D. 570	Muhammad was born during the 'year of the Elephant'.
570-572	Spends two years in the desert in the care of the S'ad ibn-Bakr clan.
576	His mother dies and he is cared for by his grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib.
578	His grandfather dies; Muhammad lives with his uncle, Abu Talib.
c. 585	Muhammad takes part in the war of the Fijar.
595	At the age of twenty-five, Muhammad marries Khadijah bint Khuwaylid bint Asad.
595-610	Muhammad manages his wife's commercial enterprises.
610	At the age of 40, Muhammad receives his first revelation.
613	Muhammad begins preaching in public.
615	He sends most of the Muslims to Abyssinia to escape persecution.
619	Abu Talib and Khadijah die.
620	The first group of Medinese follow Muhammad's teachings.
622	The <i>Hijra</i> ( <i>Hegira</i> ). Muhammad and his followers go to Medina. The beginning date of the Muslim calendar.
627	The siege of Medina. The supreme effort of the Meccans is made at this time to break Muhammad's power. The Muslims win at the 'Battle of the Trench'.
630	The <i>Fat'h</i> . The Muslims conquer Mecca and end serious opposition to Islam in Arabia.
632 (June 8th)	Death of Muhammad.

### GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC TERMS

The Five Pillars of Islam	The basic observances of Islam.
Haj	The pilgrimage to Mecca; one who has made the pilgrimage.
Ramadan	The fast during the daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.
Salat	The ritual prayer of the Muslim. This is generally performed five times a day at specified hours.
Shahada	The Muslim profession of faith: 'There is no God but Allah; Muhammad is the Prophet of God.'
Zakat	The tax levied to support the poor. It amounts to 2½ per cent of one's capital paid each year.
Allah	The Arabic name of the one God.
Amir	'Commander.' One of the titles used by the Caliphs.
Bismillah	'In the name of God' (Arabic).
Caid	A tribal leader.
Caliph	From the Arabic word for 'successor' ( <i>Khalifa</i> ). This title was given to Abu Bakr, the first successor of Muhammad, and to subsequent successors.

\* Dates from W. Montgomery Watt: *Muhammad at Mecca* and *Muhammad at Medina*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953 and 1956.

## THE PROPHET, THE KORAN AND ISLAM

Fatiha	'The opening.' The first chapter of the Koran which is used as a part of all Islamic worship.
<i>Hiyra (Hegira)</i>	The name given to the exodus of the Muslims from Mecca in 622; the first year of the Muslim calendar.
Imam	The leader of worship or public prayers.
Inshallah	'If God wills' (Arabic).
Islam	The term used to identify the system of belief that is based on the Koran. It comes from the Arabic word <i>aslama</i> , 'submit'. Islam is variously interpreted as 'submission to the will of God' or 'peace through submission to the will of God'.
Kaaba	The building which is the focus of Muslim religious observances in Mecca.
Koran	The revelation that Muhammad received from Allah. It is composed of 114 chapters. Literally the word means 'a discourse or recitation'.
Maghreb	'Land of the farthest West.' A name used principally for Morocco.
Marabout	A saint or holy man; the tomb of a holy man.
Mecca	The city in Arabia in which Muhammad was born. The spiritual centre of Islam.
Medina	The Arabian city to which Muhammad fled in 622 from the persecution of the Meccans.
Minaret	The tower of a mosque from which the muezzin announces the hours of prayer.
Muezzin	A mosque official who calls the Muslim to pray.
Muhammadanism	The incorrect name given by many Western writers to Islam. This term is offensive to the Muslim as it implies some deification of Muhammad. (Cf. Christianity and Christ.)
Muslim	The noun based on the Arabic verb <i>aslama</i> , 'submit'. It means, 'one who submits to God and thereby finds peace'.
Pasha	A Turkish governor; the representative of Ottoman power in conquered countries.
Quraish	The tribe that controlled Mecca during the time of Muhammad. He was a member of the Hashim clan of this tribe.
Rashidun	The first four successors of Muhammad—literally, 'orthodox'. Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali.
Said	A descendant of Muhammad; honorific title used chiefly in the Near East.
Shaikh	The elder or the chief of a tribe or religious order.
Sharif	A descendant of Muhammad; title used primarily in the Maghreb.
Sura	The name given to the separate revelations in the Koran; commonly equated with 'chapters'.
Ulema	The learned doctors of Islamic law; (singular: <i>alim</i> ).
Vizier	A cabinet minister.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CALIPHATE (UMAYYADS AND ABBASIDS)

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#### I THE FOUR ORTHODOX CALIPHS (THE RASHIDUN)

THE death of the Prophet left the infant Islam without a leader. Three groups in Mecca vied for the position of successor, or caliph. One group favoured Ali, the son-in-law of Muhammad, as the only legitimate caliph. Believing that God must have arranged for a line of succession through the Prophet's immediate family, these followers of Ali, the Alids, vigorously pressed their claim to the caliphate.

In his wars against idolatry, the Prophet had reduced the income of the Meccan aristocracy by stopping the revenue extracted from worshippers at the pagan shrines in the city. Recent converts to Islam, these aristocrats, the Umayyad branch of the Quraish tribe,<sup>1</sup> sought to regain their former wealth and prestige through the new religion.

A third group of aspirants to the caliphate emphasized the practice prevalent among the Arab tribes that the 'oldest and wisest' among them be chosen as leader. This course of action prevailed, and Abu Bakr, father-in-law of the Prophet, emerged as the first of the four orthodox caliphs.<sup>2</sup>

The mantle of Islam sat lightly on the shoulders of many tribal chiefs in the Arabian peninsula. Muhammad's death was the spark that ignited revolt. Abu Bakr's first task was to re-unite these tribes; and, within six months, under the able generalship of Khalid ibn-al-Walid, re-unification was complete. The momentum acquired in this internal struggle looked outward for new conquests.

<sup>1</sup> The Quraish was the tribe of Mecca. The Prophet was born in the Hashim family of the Quraish tribe.

<sup>2</sup> The first four orthodox, the Rashidun, were Abu Bakr, Umar, Othman and Ali. Abu Bakr and Ali were especially noted for their simplicity and piety. Muslims today often speak of the age of the Rashidun as the golden age of Islam, and many of them urge a return to the pious days of the first caliphs.



The first thrusts outside Arabia were probably unorganized forays by individual tribes looking for booty. Whole tribes had emigrated from Arabia in the past in search of greener pastures. But these emigrations lacked something the new movement had in abundance—the cohesive force of Islam that bound together tribal chiefs and common people in a unifying force of faith.

Two empires, the Byzantine and Persian, dominated the countries bordering Arabia in the seventh century. Natives of these countries suffered under the oppressive taxes and generally corrupt rule of their Greek and Persian masters. So it was that the Arabs found little opposition from the populace as they pushed deeper towards Iraq and Syria. After the bloody battle of Ajnadyn, on July 30, 634, all Palestine lay open to the invaders. Six months later the Syrian capital, Damascus, fell. The first of many victories over the Byzantines was an accomplished fact.

In an age when 'sack and pillage' was the usual procedure followed by a victorious army on entering a conquered city, Khalid ibn-al-Walid's terms to Damascus were humane and very modest. In fact, it seems obvious that the Arab legions considered themselves as liberators of oppressed people as well as carriers of Islam. These terms of surrender served as a model for future arrangements with Syro-Palestinian cities:

In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. This is what Khalid ibn-al-Walid would grant to the inhabitants of Damascus if he enters therein: he promises to give them security for their lives, property, and churches. Their city shall not be demolished, neither shall any Muslim be quartered in their houses. Thereunto we give to them the pact of Allah and protection of His Prophet, the caliphs and the believers. So long as they pay the poll tax, nothing but good shall befall them.<sup>1</sup>

One after another the Syrian towns capitulated until the natural limits of Syria in the north, the Taurus Mountains, were reached.

It was altogether proper that Khalid's humane terms should come at the beginning of the pious reign of Caliph Umar ibn-al-Khattab. Noted for his simplicity, Umar was always accessible to his people.

<sup>1</sup> Philip K. Hitti: *History of the Arabs*, p. 150.

He is pictured as entering Jerusalem, after its conquest, wearing a coarse woollen shirt, probably patched,<sup>1</sup> and attended by only one servant.<sup>2</sup> An astute statesman, some historians credit Umar with being the power behind the caliphate of Abu Bakr.<sup>3</sup> His regulations for governing the provinces continued in effect long after his death.

Meanwhile, on the Iraqi front, the Arabs had occupied Ctesiphon, the Persian capital, where they came into contact with a civilization beyond their wildest imaginations. Like the small boy who inherited the candy shop, the Arabian warrior was confused and bewildered by the riches at his feet. He engaged in excesses that sapped his will for battle.

At first Arab arms forged easy victories in Iraq. A disgruntled Semitic population, crushed by harsh taxation, welcomed the Arabian armies. However, as the campaign progressed northward, the Persian Emperor rallied his Aryan forces, and it was not until ten years later that final victory was achieved.

While Persia and Iraq were being subjugated in the east, Umar's legions marched against Egypt. Through Farama and Babylon to the gates of the mighty city of Alexandria came the black banner of the Prophet. The death of Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor, hastened its fall, and early in 646 Alexandria was brought into the Muslim fold.

Under Othman, the third caliph, the Arab domain was pushed west and south in a search for treasure. Tribute was exacted from Carthage, and the Berbers of Tripoli were brought to submission. The first fleet was built, and with it Cyprus was captured, Rhodes pillaged, and the Byzantine fleet destroyed off the Lycian coast.

At the accession of Ali to the caliphate, let us turn our attention to political affairs in Arabia. During his tenure in office, Caliph Othman had appointed many of his kinsmen to prominent positions in government. Charges of nepotism led to his death at the hands of a group whose leader, Muhammad, was the son of Abu Bakr. The proclaiming of Ali as caliph brought one of Othman's relatives, Muawiyah, the Governor of Syria, into open revolt. By a ruse, Muawiyah succeeded in submitting the legality of Ali's succession

<sup>1</sup> *Ibn-Sad*, v. III, pt. 1, pp. 237-9.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Atiyah: *The Arabs*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lewis: *The Arabs in History*, p. 51.

to arbitration, with the result that Ali was deposed.<sup>1</sup> This deposition alienated a fanatical segment of Ali's followers, the Kharijites, and it strengthened the subsequent claim of Muawiyah to the caliphate by placing him, a mere provincial governor, on a par with Ali.

The murder of Ali by a Kharijite, in 661, marked the close of the period of orthodoxy. Muawiyah, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty established the principle of hereditary succession by nominating his son, Yazid, as his successor.

## II THE UMAYYAD DYNASTY

As a plough biting deeply into desert sand scatters dust before it, Islam stirred the minds and hearts of the simple Arabs. Religion permeated the atmosphere. You could almost breathe it in the air around Mecca. It is not unusual, therefore, that men should differ as they thought and conversed on religious subjects. The unusual feature is that there were not more differences on such vital questions as that of succession to the caliphate.

The followers of Ali, temporarily quietened under the pious reigns of Abu Bakr and Umar, grew vociferous under the corruption of Othman's family. At first these Alids found unity in political expression which in turbulent Arabia meant recourse to arms. Finding little success on the battlefield, they turned more and more to mysticism and thoughts of an incarnate God.

Muhammad had transmitted a faith that brooked no intermediary to God and no possibility of any incarnation. His one concession to symbolism, the facing towards Mecca during prayer, gave little satisfaction to the man searching for a human symbol in which to place his faith. Yet it would seem in the very nature of man's religious urge that it should crave some tangible focus, some divine incarnation. Allah, however, is a supremely transcendental God. Though the

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning neither the army of Ali nor the army of Muawiyah wished to open hostilities. For, after all, how could the passage to heaven be cleared for the Muslim slain in a battle against other Muslims? The Prophet had promised Paradise only to those slain in the process of carrying Islam to the infidels.

When the battle was joined, Ali enjoyed initial success. Muawiyah placed pages of the Koran on the lances of his soldiers forcing the political novice, Ali, to submit to the arbitration that eventually led to his downfall.

early Muslims found no difficulty in accepting such a God, a minority of them evidently felt the need for some incarnate manifestation of God, and it was the person of Ali which they grasped with a mystical ardour. For them—known as Shi'ites<sup>1</sup>—Ali became divine, and his divinity was shared by his two sons, Hasan and Husain, to whom Ali's wife, Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, had given birth. Ali's violent death had added to him the status of a martyr, and bound his followers to a pact sealed with his blood.

This was the state of affairs when Muawiyah was proclaimed caliph at Jerusalem, in 661. Moving swiftly, Muawiyah pensioned the weak Hasan and sent him to a life of luxury in Medina where, it is reported, he was poisoned at the age of 41. Numerous revolts were put down and the empire consolidated.

Yazid, Muawiyah's son, ran into trouble immediately on becoming caliph. Husain, Ali's second son, marched against him with an insignificant military force of two hundred followers, and in a battle that amounted to a massacre, Husain and all his group were killed. Husain's death, commemorated each year by a passion play,<sup>2</sup> was the rallying point for the Shi'ite cause. He, after all, was the grandson of the Prophet, and it was the Prophet's own blood that stained the ground where Husain lay. Even more than the death of Ali, the martyrdom of Husain nurtured the Shi'ite cause under the Umayyads and eventually contributed to the downfall of the Umayyad reign.

All great religions split, as witness the many Christian sects in existence today. Islam is no exception to this rule. Approximately 10 per cent of all Muslims are Shi'ites, the other 90 per cent being orthodox Sunni.<sup>3</sup> The Sunnis acknowledge the first four caliphs as rightful successors of Muhammad and do not deviate from what they believe to have been the Prophet's practices in daily life. They reject incarnation and treat Ali as just one of the rightful successors to the mantle of the Prophet.

<sup>1</sup> Shia means party. Originally the Shi'ites were members of the party of Ali.

<sup>2</sup> This passion play is held each year in Kazimayn which is just outside the city of Baghdad. Forty days later another passion play, commemorating the return of Husain's head by Caliph Yazid, is enacted at Karbala, the scene of Husain's death.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas P. Hughes: *A Dictionary of Islam*, p. 623. The word 'Sunni' is Persian and means 'the people of the Path'. In Arabic, this word means 'custom or use'.

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The city of Constantinople, the richest and most powerful at that time, held a fatal attraction for the Arab. Three times he approached its gates but, on each occasion, he was turned back. Yazid laid siege to the city in 669, and five years later the Arab fleet engaged the fleet of the Byzantines with little success. The last great Umayyad attack came under Sulayman in 716, when a combination of famine, pestilence, savage attacks by defending Bulgars, and the 'Greek fire', a substance that burned on water, destroyed the Muslim navy.

Although Constantinople proved inaccessible, Umayyad power was felt in other directions. Under Abd-al-Malik and his four sons, Walid, Sulayman, Yazid II and Hisham, the dynasty at Damascus reached its zenith. The Oxus River, traditional boundary line between the Turkish-speaking and the Persian-speaking peoples, was crossed by Walid's army and a strong Muslim foothold established beyond it. Pushing northward, Islam made contact with Buddhism in Bukhara, Balkh and Samarqand. Al-Shash, across the Jaxartes River, was occupied.

Another Arab force moved south through Mukran in modern Baluchistan. These legions probed as far north as Multan in the southern Punjab and, thereby, brought the Indian border provinces under the protection of Allah. If it had not been for this conquest and the subsequent Islamization, Western Pakistan might never have come into existence. By 713, the expansion had spent itself in this direction.

In Africa Uqbah ibn-Nafi made war on the Berbers and defeated a number of tribes. However, the Arab hold on the Berber land was precarious, and it had to be relinquished at Uqbah's death. Not until thirty years later were these tribes really conquered and the region placed under the direct administration of Damascus.

The Arab advance into south-western Europe began in 711. Tariq, a Berber lieutenant of Musa ibn-Nusair, Umayyad governor of western Africa, crossed into Spain on a marauding expedition. Meeting weak resistance, the Arabs overran the Iberian Peninsula. Their forward momentum was not checked until the battle at Tours and Poitiers in 732. The Arab defeat was probably caused far more by problems of logistics than it was by the troops of Charles Martel.

Arabs in 732 ruled an area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the boundaries of India and China. An immense empire which

included Spain, North Africa and the Near East, professed Islam—a collection of peoples under one banner greater than any before and a domain more extensive than the Roman Empire at its height.

With such a diverse collection of nationalities within the empire, the Umayyad caliphs faced a tremendous administrative task. Islam and the Arabic language served as unifying influences in a heterogeneous conglomeration of peoples and cultures. In Basrah and Kufah the study of Arabic began. Diacritical marks were introduced and were placed over the consonant sounds to indicate vowels.<sup>1</sup> Abd-al-Malik and al-Walid changed the public registers into Arabic, initiated the creation of Arabic coinage, and developed a regular postal system.<sup>2</sup>

The Muslim Empire was divided into nine provinces: Syria-Palestine, Kufah-Iraq, Basrah, Armenia, Hijaz, Karman-Indian frontier, Egypt, Africa and Yemen-South Arabia. Viceroys, who accumulated enormous wealth at the expense of the natives, were appointed over each province to supervise the political affairs of the caliph. Non-Muslims paid a poll tax used to furnish gratuities to the Arabs, and in an effort to escape this tax, many non-believers embraced Islam. As revenue from the poll tax decreased, some way had to be found to balance the budget. The caliph solved the problem by decreeing that new converts had to pay an increased land tax. While this measure stabilized the economy for a time, it had serious social implications. Recent converts were set apart as a group of second-class citizens,<sup>3</sup> and unrest among them forged still another sword against the Umayyad reign.

Thus, we witness the formation of two streams that will join with others to inundate the caliphate at Damascus: (1) the Shi'ite hatred of the Umayyads because of the murder of Husain and the usurpation of the caliphate by force, and (2) the dissatisfaction among the

<sup>1</sup> Understandably, there was a great deal of confusion in Arabic before the introduction of vowels. Arab scholars went to the nomads of the desert for the 'pure' Arabic sounds in order to bring uniformity to the language.

<sup>2</sup> This postal system should not be confused with our modern service. It was merely a governmental adjunct and was used only for the transmission of government correspondence.

<sup>3</sup> Umayyad society was stratified into four classes of descending importance: (1) Muslims, (2) Clients, (3) People of the Book—Christians, Jews and Sabians were originally designated in this category; later Zoroastrians and even 'heathens' were included—and (4) Slaves.

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clients<sup>1</sup> and non-Muslims over high taxes to support the Arab aristocracy in idleness.

Tribal warfare, dating back to pre-Islamic times, was a continuing menace to secure government. Before the rise of the Prophet, conflict among the various tribes in Arabia intensified deep-rooted animosities and inculcated into these tribes a fierce pride of membership. Clearly defined genealogical trees designated the members of the different groups. These animosities and prejudices, this pride of membership, were carried into the Empire.

Originally segregated into camps outside the conquered cities, the Arabs maintained their old tribal structures and eventually coalesced into units corresponding roughly to places of origin in north or south Arabia. Feuds between north and south flared up throughout the Umayyad reign, usually over succession to the caliphate. The Umayyad caliphs used first one side and then the other to advance their own political fortunes.

While South Arabia supplied many of the early settlers to Syria and Iraq, the conquering tribes often came from northern Arabia. Any conquering army creates a certain amount of ill-will, if for no other reason than that of the behaviour of its troops. Add to this the background of tribal strife, and all the elements of revolt are at hand.

Cultural pursuits lacked direction under the Umayyads, and, except for religion and language, the Arab brought nothing new to the conquered people. His desert heritage limited his intellectual horizon, for the desert warrior symbolized the Arabian ideal. Arab nobility was more interested in war than in patronage of the arts and sciences.

In spite of this elevation of the warrior class, there is evidence of some achievement outside the realm of battle. Umayyad art found expression in mosques and palaces; poetry and music flourished in Mecca and Medina, and certain caliphs, notably al-Walid and Umar II, patronized medical science.

Umayyad caliphs emphasized Arab nationality in the life of the empire in which Arabs were given all the important posts. This practice of racial superiority reaped a reward of antagonism from the subject peoples, especially the Persians, who viewed resentfully the

<sup>1</sup> Clients were the converts to Islam.

impact made upon their ancient culture by the semi-barbarous Arab. Reference has been made previously to the astonishment of the Arab warrior when first he viewed its wealth.

Gradually the Umayyad caliph developed into a symbol of uncultured oppression. His policy of racial superiority infuriated the Persians, and their agitation increased as they reflected on their obeisance to him. The flood of discontent surged highest around Damascus.

Education for the people under the Umayyads consisted in learning the Koran and *Hadith*<sup>1</sup> from professional memorizers who held classes in the mosques. Committing the Holy Book to memory was a serious obligation, and remains so in Muslim countries of the present. Ibn Battuta, while travelling through Islamic territories in the fourteenth century, recounts having seen children put in chains for backwardness in learning the Koran.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly this was an unusual practice limited to a small section of the Muslim world. However, because of the lack of writing materials, prodigious memories were cultivated and the memorizer became an important member of society.

The Syrian desert was the school for the early Umayyad royalty. Here the Umayyad prince learned the Arabic language undefiled by contact with foreign civilizations. His contact with 'pure' Arabic has helped to preserve and disseminate the language. Unfortunately for the Umayyad, this contact also served to further his belief in Arab superiority. The mind of his poets became ossified by the tyranny of style and form. Umayyad literature reflects the resulting artificiality as in a mirror continually exposed to one view—the desert nomad. An educated man was one who could read, write and use the bow and arrow. Courage and endurance, in keeping with the desert tradition, were as highly honoured as were hospitality and a regard for women.

Because they were unable and unwilling to evaluate the superior cultures of the Syrians and Persians, the Arab rulers often chose to honour the worst elements within them. Licentiousness, concubinage, and all the excesses of the flesh became part of court life, although Islam counsels moderation in all things. The sight of the

<sup>1</sup> *Hadith* are traditions of the Prophet. These traditions have the force of law in Islam, ranking next to the Koran in importance.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibn Battuta, Travels in Asia and Africa*, translated by H. A. R. Gibb, p. 330.



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caliph flaunting his indiscretions in public view enraged the religious element in a society whose fundamental basis for existence was religion. The completely secular disposition of the later Umayyads caused the final stream of discontent to break its banks and join the mighty river of hatred flowing toward Damascus.

Within the cities the civilian population flexed its muscles. Arab territorial expansion had come to a halt in 732. The day of the warrior as the most important element in Islamic society was past. The days of the conquest were over, and it was the merchant, the artisan, the scholar, and the farmer who now claimed their rights. Reminiscent of American or British feeling towards the military services after the last two World Wars, the Arab civilian resented paying the high taxes necessary to support the soldier.

Having already extended the empire beyond the limits of effective control, the army could engage only in minor skirmishes along the borders or act to keep a subjugated populace under the control of a corrupt caliph. As resentment against the military grew in the centres of population, recruiting for the service became increasingly difficult. Lacking popular support, the army ceased to be an effective fighting machine.

Into the turbulent waters of discontent, fed by Shi'ite hatred, excessive taxation, tribal conflicts, Arab racialism, civilian rancour, corrupt government and the degeneration of the Umayyad army, sailed the ship of the Abbasids in the person of Abu al-Abbas, a descendant of the Prophet's uncle al-Abbas ibn-Hashim. By the use of skilful propaganda, this Abbasid rode the crest of the flood that poured vengeance on the tottering Umayyad Dynasty.

Arab colonists had settled in Basrah and Kufah some time about 670. Among these colonists was an extremist Shi'ite sect whose leader, having died without issue, passed on his authority to Muhammad ibn-Ali ibn-al-Abbas, the father of the first Abbasid caliph.<sup>1</sup> A binding alliance was thus formed between the Shia and the house of al-Abbas, an alliance dedicated to the downfall of the Umayyads. Pledging a return to orthodoxy, the Abbasids drew many pious Muslims to their

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad ibn-Ali was accepted by the Shia because he could claim a closer relationship to the Prophet than could the ruling Umayyads.

cause. The religious Muslim, outraged by the secularism of the Umayyad court, appeared to have found a champion. Clients and non-Muslims, particularly the Persians and Iraqi, flocked to the Abbasid standard with the idea that any change would be for the better.

And so opposition grew stronger, its roots buried in ancient hatreds and new dissents. Open revolt broke out on June 9, 747. Abu-Muslim, a Persian freedman, at the head of a South Arabian tribe which included many clients and Iranian peasants, entered Marw, the Khurasan capital. A Syrian uprising prevented the caliph from sending aid to his beleaguered Persian governor.<sup>1</sup> The Kharijites, that small but fanatical group of revolutionaries from whose number had come the murderer of Ali joined the insurrection in Iraq. Marwan II, the last Umayyad caliph, and generally regarded by historians as a competent ruler, had too little and came too late to avert disaster.

Kufah fell to the black banner of the Abbasids in 749, and Abu-al-Abbas was proclaimed caliph. One year later Damascus surrendered. Marwan II, fleeing his throne, was beheaded outside a church in Egypt. A concerted programme to eliminate all vestiges of the previous dynasty from public life was initiated by the new ruler. Even the graves of the Umayyads were desecrated, with the exception of that of the pious Umar II.

Kufah on the Persian border became the new capital. Inevitably the whole orientation of the empire swung towards Persia: Persians formed the caliphal bodyguard, and Persians occupied the chief posts of government.

The reign of the Umayyads marked the end of the Arab period in the history of Islam. Under the Abbasids, the court and its dominions took on a more international character.

## III THE ABBASID DYNASTY

Al-Abbas rode to power on the shoulders of many dissentient elements: Shi'ites envisioned a return of Ali's descendants to the throne; Khari-

<sup>1</sup> Marwan II had antagonized the Syrians because he had transferred his residence to Mesopotamia.

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jites fought out of a rebellious spirit and a love for fighting; clients, non-Muslims, Persians and Iraqis struggled for status and prestige. For most of these ill-assorted allies Abbasid leadership was merely a temporary expedient, a compromise that brought them into action against a common foe.<sup>1</sup>

In the aftermath of victory these diverse forces pressed for their original objectives. To the Islamic canons of One God and a divine Koran, the Shia had added a third precept—the belief in the divinity of an Imam<sup>2</sup> who descended from the Prophet through Ali and Fatima. Al-Abbas<sup>2</sup> promised 'return to orthodoxy' meant, to the Shi'ites, a caliph chosen from the 'divine' line of Hassan, brother of the martyred Husain. The Shi'ites looked upon the Abbasids as usurpers and took up arms against them. As has so often happened in Islamic history, the Shi'ites lost the battle but not the war, and Shi'ite dissatisfaction remained a festering sore on the Abbasid body politic.

Whatever else may be said of the drastic tactics used by Abu al-Abbas to quiet dissent, they were certainly effective. His adoption of the name al-Saffah, the bloodshedder, was no idle gesture. This first Abbasid spread a leather carpet over the rug beside his throne so that it would not be soiled by the rolling heads brought down by his executioner.

As a sop to the religious-minded, al-Abbas surrounded himself with theologians, and unlike the Umayyad who sent one of his favourite harem girls to the mosque to lead the prayers, the Abbasid kept his impiety concealed. However, within the palace walls the old licentiousness continued.

Under Persian influence a marked change occurred in the concept of the caliphate. The caliph became an autocrat in the Persian fashion and would even assume the attributes of God. Not content with the title 'Deputy of the Prophet of God', the Abbasid called himself 'Deputy of God'. A well-oiled propaganda machine spread the story of the caliph's 'divine office'.

<sup>1</sup> The Allied Powers in World War II formed a similar alliance on a broader base as democracy walked with communism in order to defeat the fascist states in Europe. We know the conflict that arose in the camp of the victors after the war had been won.

<sup>2</sup> A religious leader.

The Abbasids faced a diminished empire in 754. Spain, North Africa, Oman, Sind, and Khurasan refused allegiance to the Abbasid caliph. Pro-Alid residents of Kufah compelled the Abbasids to move their capital from that city to Anbar. Al-Mansur, brother and successor of al-Saffah, succeeded in bringing about some semblance of order. A calculating statesman and a great leader, Mansur sometimes was cruel and treacherous. Abu-Muslim, whose mighty sword had been instrumental in the victories of al-Abbas, met death while having a 'friendly' audience with the caliph. In rapid succession Mansur put down the revolt of his uncle Abdullah in Syria; quashed a Shi'ite revolt; defeated a sect of Persian extremists; and quelled an insurrection in Khurasan led by Sunbad the Magian. Except for Spain and North Africa, he bequeathed a consolidated empire to his son.

As the policies of Umar guided the early Arab conquests, and as the policies of Muawiyah guided the Umayyads, so, too, did the policies of Mansur guide the Abbasids. To him goes the credit for laying the foundation of the Abbasid Dynasty. One of his most notable contributions was the building of Baghdad, a city that, in less than fifty years, became the centre of world culture. Mansur also introduced the office of vizier<sup>1</sup> into the Arabian state and, thereby, started a bureaucracy which probed into every aspect of life within the empire. Khalid ibn-Barmak, the first vizier, served as a counsellor to the caliph and, at first, acted only in an advisory capacity. Yahya, Khalid's son, educated Harun al-Rashid and, when Harun became caliph, he appointed him to the post of vizier with unlimited power. Gradually the family of Khalid, the Barmacids,<sup>2</sup> gained enormous wealth and virtually ruled the empire from 786 to 803; but the strong-willed Caliph Harun ended their reign by executing Jafar, the grandson of Khalid.

Military conquest under the Abbasids can be described in one sentence: they conquered Sicily and a few lesser islands in the Mediterranean.<sup>3</sup> Baghdad held only nominal control over these outlying

<sup>1</sup> In Arabic 'vizier' is 'wazir'. It means 'the bearer of a burden'—Ameer Ali: *A Short History of the Saracens*, p. 410. While the word is Arabic, the office is Persian.

<sup>2</sup> These Barmacids were noted for their generosity. Even today in Arab countries, the phrase 'as munificent as Jafar' is a simile that is understood everywhere.

<sup>3</sup> Sardinia and Crete were among the islands conquered.

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possessions, and until the accession of the Fatimid Dynasty in Egypt they were administered from Tunisia, often independently of the home government.

An abortive attempt to subjugate Byzantium by al-Mahdi, the third caliph, ended at the Bosphorus. Irene, regent of the Byzantines, sued for peace and paid tribute to the Arabs. From time to time the military conducted sporadic raids along the borders of the empire, but these were more in the nature of manœuvres to keep the army in fighting trim. The day of the soldier had passed. We must turn to the intellectual aspects of life under the Abbasids for a measure of their greatness.

The Abbasid Empire was a combination of East and West. Removal of the capital from Damascus to Baghdad lessened the Western influence of Byzantium and increased the Oriental influence of Persia. Islam and the Arabic language moulded these diversified influences into an amalgam that was truly Arab. Harun al-Rashid and his son, al-Mamun, reigned in a Baghdad that was the centre of culture in the Western world.

As important as the fact of Baghdad's rise to cultural supremacy are the reasons which contributed to that rise. These reasons go deeper than geographical location, although proximity to Persia undoubtedly made a contribution. They even go deeper than the factors which aided in establishing Abbasid supremacy: namely, the religious mysticism that pricked men's minds, the high taxes that always compel men to take a closer look at government, the poverty that urges change for a better world, the struggle for prestige that often sends men into a search for power, and the military contraction that frees men's intellects for other pursuits.

The Arab felt inferior to the superior cultures about him. The inferior man may choose the path of the Umayyads and stifle his curiosity behind a wall of stoic resistance to cultural achievement; he may set himself apart from his environment and refuse to acknowledge its existence. Or he may actively follow the path of the Abbasids and open the floodgates, allowing the many intellectual streams to flow through his mind. The moment the Arab threw open the gate, the whole Persian culture poured into the empire.

It would be unfair to classify the Umayyad as all-stagnant in intel-

lectual curiosity or the Abbasid as all-active in intellectual pursuits.<sup>1</sup> These terms are relative, as much a part of the times as they are of the people who played their roles within them. The Abbasid built his strength on religion. Whatever his innermost motives, al-Abbas had come to power on the crest of a religious revival, and he needed to pay homage to Islam in order to protect his authority over his newly-won subjects. A *hadith* enjoins the Arab 'to seek knowledge even unto China'.<sup>2</sup> The Abbasid sought knowledge, if not wholly as a religious injunction, at least to run an empire of many cultures. By pursuing knowledge through religion, the caliphs appeased both religious reformers and inquisitive intellectuals.

Harun al-Rashid and Charlemagne are the two dominant figures in the world at the beginning of the ninth century. Western writers credit numerous exchanges of gifts and embassies between these two potentates. However, Arab chroniclers remain silent on the subject, leaving us to assume that the Holy Roman Empire was unimportant in Arab eyes.

The reign of Harun is marked as a period of luxuriant living. It is a tale of gold dishes, rich tapestries and lavish parties unequalled in the history of the world. Slaves by the hundred peopled magnificent palaces and catered to every caliphal whim. The spectacle of court life presented scenes later depicted in the *Arabian Nights*.

The Caliph's palace at Baghdad was like the hub of a giant wheel with spokes radiating to all parts of the empire. A continuous stream of scientists, theologians, musicians, poets and merchants walked these spokes to pay homage to the Abbasid caliph; he in turn listened, learned and patronized. The golden age of Arab arts and letters, the zenith of Arab sciences, was at hand.

A thriving trade brought luxuries to the court of Baghdad. From Russia and lands along the Volga came furs, skins and amber. Muslim coins of the period have been found in far away Scandinavia, although it is doubtful whether Arab merchants reached these remote lands. Oriental spices and silks, and African gold and slaves added to the Abbasid wealth.

<sup>1</sup> Abd al-Malik and his son, al-Walid, to mention two Umayyad caliphs, contributed greatly to architecture. Al-Malik's Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem was unsurpassed in beauty.

<sup>2</sup> *Misbah ush-Shariat*. A *hadith*, tradition, of the Prophet.

This luxurious living carried with it the germs of dissipation. The Koranic injunction against excesses of the flesh was all but forgotten by the nobility: wine flowed freely at the numerous palace parties; concubines, slaves, eunuchs and drunkards held the ear of the caliphs and often dictated their policies.

Upon the death of Harun, the age-old problem of succession arose to plague the Abbasids. Harun had divided his kingdom between his two sons, Amin and Mamun. Both brothers wanted 'all the marbles in the pot' and, after a bitter struggle in which Amin was assassinated, Mamun, in 813, assumed the caliphate.

Greek influence on Arab culture reached its zenith under Mamun's direction. A worthy successor to Harun, he established a 'House of Wisdom' in Baghdad that combined a library, an academy and a translation bureau. Many Greek texts, particularly those of Aristotle, were translated into Arabic. It is worth noting that through Baghdad, into Morocco and Spain flowed a Greek culture that was to spur the European Renaissance; a circuitous route, to be sure, but one followed by the shifting emphasis of history.

Abbasid civilization declined after the accession of Mamun's nephew, Mutawakkil, in 847. From that time on the Baghdad caliphs became unimportant figureheads in a fragmentated empire. In fact, the Abbasid Empire, throughout its long nominal existence, was only as strong as the captain at the helm. A strong caliph held a firm grip on his territories; a weak caliph found petty sultans in control of his provinces, leaving him only Baghdad and its surroundings.

That empires disintegrate is no historical novelty. Size and a mixture of nationalities contribute to fragmentation, and all empires must needs carry within them seeds of dissolution that make unity hard to achieve. For all of this the Abbasid Empire fared better than its predecessors in Greece and Rome. Her people dressed like Arabs and lived like Arabs. From a cultural, religious and linguistic point of view the Arab Empire enjoyed more homogeneity than others before or since.

The Abbasid state had been born in dissent, whelped on compromise and matured in the assimilation of foreign cultures. While Shi'ites and Kharijites may have been quelled on the battlefield by al-Abbas and Mansur, agitation continued underground. Religious Muslims may have been silenced temporarily by the outward piety

of the Abbasids, but they were not unaware of the impieties of the court.

Abbasid religious hypocrisy revived sectarianism throughout the empire. This also contributed to the development of Islamic mysticism, known as Sufism. Shi'ism took its final form at this time, but also produced numerous mystical offshoots.<sup>1</sup>

Persians had profited from the Abbasid victory more than any other single group within the empire. Through the office of vizier, a bureaucracy developed to enormous proportions, and eventually smothered under the weight of its own numbers. This tremendous pyramid of bureaucratic machinery, with the caliph at its apex, became impotent as a functioning agency of the government.

In order to support the caliph in luxury at Baghdad, the people fell deeper into poverty. High taxes were necessary to maintain the rulers in the manner to which they had become accustomed; but now that the conquests had ended, new sources of wealth were not available for exploitation. The moneys for the great numbers of government functionaries and court 'hangers-on' had to come from the people within the empire.

The early Abbasid caliphs supported agriculture. Mansur, Mahdi and Mamun reduced taxes levied on the peasantry, built irrigation systems and drained swamps. Under the later Abbasids excessive taxes discouraged farming and industry. Usually only industries supplying luxuries to the court received consistent caliphal support, and the inevitable result of this policy was an unbalanced economy in which the farmer found little compensation for his tilling of the soil.

Bigamy and concubinage rotted the Abbasid government. Slave boys cared for growing princes and attachments between these youths led to political intrigue when they matured, for a slave who had been the bosom companion of a prince in his formative years often gained an important position in the state.

Almost from its very inception a succession of independent kingdoms arose within the borders of the Abbasid Empire. Abd-al-Rahman established an Umayyad dynasty in Spain six years after al-Abbas assumed the caliphate. Twenty-two years later, in 788, Idris ibn-Abdullah, another descendant of the Prophet, set up a Shi'ite dynasty

<sup>1</sup> Among these offshoots were the Ismaelites. This sect, in turn, divided into Assassins, Druzes, Qarmatians and others.



## THE CALIPHATE (UMAYYADS AND ABBASIDS)

in Morocco. The Aghlabids ruled Tunisia after 800, and the Tulunids took over Egypt between 868 and 905.

In the east the same process of dismemberment came from Turks and Persians as was happening in the west under the Arabs.

### MINOR DYNASTIES IN THE EAST—NINTH CENTURY

<i>Dynasty</i>	<i>Founder</i>	<i>Territory</i>	<i>Years</i>
Tahirids	Tahir ibn-al Husayn of Khurasan. A provincial governor under Mamun	Areas east of Baghdad to the borders of India	820-872
Saffarids	Yaqub ibn-al-Layth-al-Saffar. An outlaw who had been entrusted with troop command	Persia and the outskirts of India	867-908
Samanids	Nasr ibn-Ahmad	Transoxiana and Persia	874-999

While the empire disintegrated, home rule weakened under a succession of feeble caliphs. Harun's son, al-Mutasim, feared the Persian troops that made up the palace bodyguard and, therefore, imported Turks to counteract their influence. This action merely aggravated an already delicate situation. The haughty Turks soon came into conflict with the Baghdad population. Fearing a native uprising, al-Mutasim moved his capital to Samarra, where succeeding caliphs became prisoners of the military. Even the return of the caliphate to Baghdad failed to restore the weakened dynasty.

Impiety, corruption, high taxes and luxurious living snuffed out the grandeur of Baghdad, but the pollen of its civilization spread westward into Europe. Its impact is still felt eleven hundred years later.

### RECOMMENDED READING

- Brockelman, Carl: *History of the Islamic Peoples*. New York, 1947.  
 Hitti, Philip: *History of the Arabs*. London, 1956.

## ISLAM AND THE ARABS

### CHRONOLOGY

#### THE ORTHODOX CALIPHS (THE RASHIDUN)

NAME	DATES	CONTRIBUTIONS AND EVENTS
Abu Bakr	632-634	United Arabia under Islam. Started the conquest of Syria. Collected the Koran from many written sources and started the task of assembly.
Umar	634-644	Organized the government of the new empire. Conquered Iraq, Syria and Egypt. Started the conquest of Persia.
Othman	644-656	Assembled Koran into an official version. Conquered Persia. Appointed relatives to important governmental posts.
Ali	656-661	Became the symbol of incarnation for the Shi'ites. Father of Husain, the most important Shi'ite martyr.

#### THE UMAYYAD CALIPHATE

Muawiyah	661-680	Consolidated the Arab Empire. Extended the Arab domain across North Africa and across the Oxus River but not on a permanent basis. Established his capital at Damascus, Syria. Introduced the principle of hereditary succession to the caliphate.
Abd-al-Malik	685-705	Extended and consolidated Arabic gains in North Africa and Tukharistan. Subjugated the Indian border provinces. Arabized the state. Minted the first Arabic coins. Changed the public registers into the Arabic language. Started a postal service. Erected the Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem.
Al-Walid I	705-715	Patron of the arts. Continued the Arabization of the state. The greatest Umayyad builder. Built hospitals, schools and mosques. Endowed institutions for lepers, blind and lame. Vowels are introduced into Arabic. Tariq invades Spain (711).

## THE CALIPHATE (UMAYYADS AND ABBASIDS)

### THE Umayyad Caliphate

NAME	DATES	CONTRIBUTIONS AND EVENTS
Umar II	717-720	Became the Umayyad saint. A pious, ascetic leader surrounded by theologians.
Hisham	724-743	Last great statesman of Umayyads. Tolerant of religion. Christian church built in Kufah. Reconquered Transoxiana. Quelled African revolts (741).

### THE Abbasid Caliphate

Al-Saffah	750-754	Set up an international empire of Persians, Syrians, and Arabs. Attributed 'divine right' to the Abbasid caliphate.
Mansur	754-775	Firmly established the Abbasid dynasty. Built Baghdad (762). Introduced the office of vizier into the government. Initiated a bureaucracy to control the state. Hindu arithmetic first introduced to the court.
Harun al-Rashid	786-809	Greatest ruler of ninth century. A contemporary of Charlemagne. Great patron of arts and science. Gave support to agriculture and industry. Expanded the postal service. Baghdad grew to a city of world importance.
Mamun	813-833	Established a combination library, academy and translation bureau in Baghdad. Greek influence reached its zenith. Galen, Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle were translated. Astronomers determined the length of the terrestrial degree. Geography, medicine and arithmetic were studied. The most authoritative collection of <i>hadith</i> , that of Muhammad ibn-Ismail al-Bukhari, was compiled.
Mutawakkil	847-861	First caliph in decline of the Abbasids. Murdered by his Persian guards.

## CHAPTER 4

### FROM THE CALIPHATE TO THE END OF THE OTTOMANS

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#### I THE LATER DYNASTIES

WHEN the Abbasid al-Mutasim formed a military corps of Turkish slaves, he opened the way for their domination of the Caliphate for centuries to come. For some twenty years after al-Mutasim's death, the Turkish elements were content to control the succession of caliphs who followed each other almost as closely as one French premier follows his predecessor. However, when the Caliph Mutazz (866-869) sent the Turk Ahmad ibn Tulun to Egypt as his representative, the ambitions of this powerful group changed. Ibn Tulun usurped control of Egypt, placed himself on the throne and declared its independence from the caliph at Baghdad—an action which made the country independent for the first time since the days of the Pharaohs.

After building up a strong army dominated by a bodyguard of Turkish slaves, Ibn Tulun moved into Syria and annexed it to Egypt. Although this splitting of the empire of the caliphs so weakened it that it never regained its once great position, nevertheless the result was generally beneficial for its citizens. The Abbasid dynasty provided caliphs to guide the fortunes of Islam until the early thirteenth century, but the actual control rested in the hands of the lesser dynasties that combined to make up the Islamic empire. These dynasties, because they controlled smaller areas, were able to exercise more efficient rule over their subjects, thus improving industry, trade and living conditions.

The Tulunids proved themselves to be patrons of art and architecture; and under the leadership of Ibn Tulun, built the famous mosque which bears his name at his capital—al-Fustad. He was also

interested in the economic development of Egypt, because it was to his advantage to maintain a prosperous country. To this end he concerned himself with irrigation and the improvement of the Nilometer, a device used to determine the depth of the river so vital to Egyptian existence.

The very element that provided Ibn Tulun's power, the Turkish troops, proved to be the undoing of his short-lived dynasty. As long as he kept a firm hand on the reins of government, the mercenary troops were content to obey him. However, as soon as his successors gave evidence of weakness and preoccupation with luxurious living, the troops changed their allegiance and refused to support them. Without this help the dynasty was powerless to withstand the Abbassids, and by 905 was forced to give way to the Caliphate.

Muslim expansion in the Mediterranean area did not limit itself to either the mainland of Asia Minor or to North Africa. As early as 652, raiders, fresh from victories in Syria and Egypt, ravaged the Sicilian port of Syracuse. The next two centuries witnessed sporadic raids by Muslim pirates and adventurers, but it was not until 827 that the Aghlabids of North Africa began invading the island with conquest in mind. By 878 Sicily was completely in Muslim hands. When the Aghlabid dynasty was supplanted by the powerful Fatimids, the control of Sicily fell into their hands, where it remained until taken over by a native Muslim dynasty called the Kalbites.

During the last decade of the tenth century the Kalbite dynasty reached its height. This zenith of Muslim culture in Sicily witnessed the introduction of sugar cane and rice from India; silkworms and mulberry trees from Persia; apricots, peaches and lemons from Syria; and cotton, pomegranates and saffron from Egypt and Arabia.<sup>1</sup> Progress in agriculture and luxurious living were not enough to make an enduring kingdom for the Kalbites. Civil war and Byzantine interference weakened their power and opened the island to invasion in 1060 by Roger I, one of the many sons of Tancred de Hauteville.

Roger I spent thirty years subduing the Muslims and consolidating his control of the island—a feat that is even more remarkable than the famous Norman invasion of England, when one realizes that

<sup>1</sup> Joseph R. Strayer: *The Middle Ages: 395–1500*, p. 142. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1942.

Roger had a much smaller army and met much stiffer resistance. Roger I began the encouragement of Muslim scholars and artisans that was continued by Roger II and Frederick II. The flowering of learning in Sicily under the Normans surpassed anything similar in medieval Europe. Roger I retained the administrative system established by the Muslims, and Norman barons and Muslim amirs carried on the daily business of government in perfect harmony.

The earliest extant European paper document was executed in Sicily, and the first European coin bearing the date in Arabic numerals was minted on the island in 1138. The great Muslim cartographer abu-Abdullah al-Idrisi drew his famous maps of the known world under the aegis of Roger II. Frederick II's interest in natural science led him to support Muslim scholars in fields as divergent as mathematics, biology, zoology, astrology, falconry and hygiene.

The Muslims left their mark not only upon Sicily's learning but equally upon her daily life. During the rule of Roger II and Frederick II, Arabic became the official language along with Latin, and the use of Arabic clothing styles, food and architecture made it hard for a visitor to distinguish this Christian kingdom from its contemporary Muslim neighbours of the Near East or Spain.

The importance of Sicily as one of the forces that stimulated the early Renaissance cannot be over-emphasized. The fusion of Muslim learning and Greek philosophy in Sicily gave an impetus to Europe's entire intellectual development during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

While the fortunes of the Tulunids were waning in Egypt, a new power block was beginning to make its influence felt in North Africa. Following the tactics of the Abbasids, this new group used the guise of religious reform to further its own political ends. The Fatimids, as this new dynasty was called, traced their ancestry to Fatima, Muhammad's daughter, and availed themselves of this tie to give a certain aura of legitimacy to their conquests. The Fatimids used the religious activities of the Ismaili sect of the Shi'ites to win the support of the people throughout North Africa. This sect taught that the Koran had two meanings, one exoteric and literal and the other esoteric and known only to the initiated. The head of the group was the Imam,

considered an infallible leader who could trace his lineage from Ali and Fatima.<sup>1</sup>

From the ninth century to the collapse of the Fatimid empire, the Ismailis grew in power and influence. A strong group in the Yemen sent missionaries to North Africa who were able to stir up the Berber tribes and to sow seeds of discontent and religious schism, paving the way for the downfall of the Aghlabid dynasty that had been ruling in much of North Africa. With the help of missionary and military leaders, the first Fatimid Imam, Ubaydullah, established himself in Tunisia in 909. By demanding and receiving absolute obedience and by using their role as infallible imams, the first four Fatimid leaders were able to consolidate their control of North Africa and to prepare the way for the invasion of Egypt.

Al-Muizz, the fourth Fatimid caliph, used a combination of propaganda and 'Fifth Column' activities to undermine the power of the Ikhshidid dynasty that had replaced the Tulunids. The Fatimids conquered Alexandria in 914, the Delta region in 916, and by 969, under the leadership of their great military leader Jawhar, they moved into the old Tulunid capital of al-Fustad. Jawhar laid out a new section on the outskirts of al-Fustad which he named al-Qahira (Cairo). He was also responsible for building the great al-Azhar mosque which has remained to the present one of the most important religious and scholastic centres in Islam.

During the reign of the fifth Fatimid caliph, Nizar al-Aziz, the dynasty reached its highest point in power, prosperity and extent. The development of trade, the building up of plantations and the encouragement of industry so increased the power of this dynasty that it was able to exert its influence in Syria, Arabia, much of North Africa, and, on one occasion, even in Baghdad. However, this period of power closed with the death of al-Aziz and the succession of Ali Mansur al-Hakim in 996. The latter's rule marked a low point in the history of Islam's treatment of non-Muslims. For the most part, the Muslims were tolerant of both Christians and Jews, but al-Hakim instituted harsh, repressive measures that made their lot extremely unpleasant.

Al-Hakim's mental aberrations were evidenced by such actions as

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lewis: *The Arabs in History*, p. 107. London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1954.

ordering the destruction, in 1009, of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, killing some of his viziers for no apparent reason, and declaring himself the incarnation of God. His death, at the hands of assassins, left the government in the control of viziers who acted as regents for youthful caliphs. Because of much internal friction and jealousy, the outlying provinces of the Fatimid empire rebelled and finally severed their ties altogether. From that time on, the Fatimid dynasty fought a losing battle to hold its rotting empire in some semblance of order.

The dangerous policy started by al-Aziz of using hired troops to control the empire finally led to its inevitable collapse. Rivalry between Berber, Turkish, and Sudanese soldiers kept Egypt in a constant state of unrest—a condition that was intensified by the machinations of power-hungry viziers who used the troops to further their own ambitions. The last century of Fatimid power was marked by assassinations, abductions, and usurpations that did little to improve the lot of the people. Famine and plague decimated the population; and exorbitant taxes killed the initiative of the artisans and farmers who, in the past, had been the keystone of Fatimid prosperity.

The dependence on outside leadership and troops finally ended the Fatimid dynasty for all time. A fatal mistake on the part of the last Fatimid leader was to ask a young Kurdish officer named Salah-al-Din ibn Ayyub (hence the dynastic name Ayyubid) to act as vizier. This error in judgment, comparable to asking Jesse James to act as treasurer of the local bank, ended the two and a half century rule of the Fatimids. With his customary initiative and success, soon to be experienced first hand by the Crusaders, Salah-al-Din ended the Fatimid Caliphate and restored Egypt to the fold of Sunni Islam.

Salah-al-Din (Saladin) had little difficulty in consolidating his hold on Egypt, and by 1174 he was able to take control of Yemen, Hejaz and parts of the Sudan. Egypt again prospered under his strong leadership, and in 1187 his forces were powerful enough to take the field against the Crusaders. By 1193, Salah-al-Din was able to expel the Europeans from most of Palestine and Syria. However, when it looked as if the Crusaders were about to be driven into the sea, Salah-al-Din died.



In 1193, the year of Salah-al-Dīn's death, the hard-won empire of the Ayyubids began disintegrating. He had made no provision for the line of succession, and, as a result, his three sons and a younger brother split the territory among them. The brother, al-Adil, took advantage of the discord among the other rulers, and gained control of the bulk of the area conquered by Salah-al-Dīn. The scant century of Ayyubid power was one battle after another with the Crusaders, who kept a constant pressure on Egypt. The last major engagement in which this dynasty met the Christians was the invasion of the Nile delta by Louis IX of France. This abortive attack ended in the capture of the French king and most of his nobles, but the victory was an empty one for the descendants of Salah-al-Dīn.

Within a year after defeating the French the Ayyubids had lost control of Egypt and were forced to be content with small scattered possessions in Syria and Mesopotamia. Their downfall was not due to the efforts of their natural enemies—the Crusaders. The enemy was within their own court. The traditional policy of hiring foreign troops or, more frequently, of buying slaves to man the army, once again brought about the collapse of a dynasty that had depended upon them for support.

Shajar al-Durr, the slave-widow of the last powerful Ayyubid, managed to eliminate her husband's two legitimate successors and to usurp the tottering throne for herself. She ruled for eighty days as sultana, the only Muslim woman in North Africa or western Asia ever to attain that position. She had coins struck bearing her name, and had her name mentioned in the weekly prayers at the mosques.<sup>1</sup> After causing the murder of her new husband, himself an ex-slave, she was beaten to death by the slave women of another of his wives. Thus ended, in 1250, the career of a woman who might be considered the last of the Ayyubids and the first representative of the new dynasty—the Mamluks.

The positive contributions of the Ayyubid dynasty are primarily the result of Salah-al-Dīn's outstanding gifts. He made it his guiding policy to combat Shi'ism by re-educating the people along orthodox lines. To accomplish this he built schools and academies throughout his empire—especially in Cairo, Alexandria and Damascus. In the latter city a visitor in 1184 speaks of twenty schools, two free hospitals,

<sup>1</sup> Hitti, *op. cit.*, p. 672.

and numerous monasteries.<sup>1</sup> Of the many reputedly fine buildings constructed during the rule of Salah-al-Din, only the famous Citadel of Cairo remains. The architecture indicates the use of captured Crusaders as helpers in design and construction. The Citadel also owes a debt to ancient Egypt because its foundation stones had been taken from small pyramids.

The Mamluk or 'slave' dynasty in Egypt lasted a little short of 270 years, and required nearly fifty different sultans to control its rebellious subjects. The first great sultan of the Mamluks was Baybars, a Qipchaq Turk. His rise to power, representative as it is of most of the Mamluks' succession to the position of sultan, will be useful to trace.

After being sold to an early Mamluk sultan, he was appointed as leader of one group of bodyguards. From this vantage point, the energetic and ruthless Baybars moved in rapid steps to the leadership of the army. In his new position he was the key factor in the defeat of the Mongols who swept through Persia and Syria under the leadership of Hulagu, the grandson of Genghiz Khan. His services to Egypt were not rewarded in the way he felt they should have been; so, with the aid of some disgruntled soldiers, he murdered al-Qutuz and took his place. In addition to defeating the Mongols, Baybars must be given the credit for ending the real threat of the Crusaders in Syria.

Baybars did much more than build up the army and navy. He was especially interested in public works of all kinds, including canals, mosques, schools and harbours. Under his guidance an efficient postal system that utilized both swift horses and carrier pigeons was organized to connect Egypt with Syria. An act typical of Baybars' genius was establishing a member of the Abbasid family in Cairo as caliph. This action served both to give his reign the appearance of religious legitimacy and to rally the orthodox to his support. It did little, however, to enhance the power of the caliphs, who were used as mere puppets to approve the actions of the secular authority.

Unfortunately for the Mamluks, the many successors of Baybars had little of his genius for organization. One of them comparable

<sup>1</sup> Hitti, *op. cit.*, p. 660.

in greatness to him was al-Nasir, who had the distinction of ruling three different times between 1293 and 1340. He is best known for the canal that he constructed from Alexandria to the Nile—an effort that required the toil of one hundred thousand men. The mosque and school that he built mark a high point in Muslim architecture, while the artisans of his era produced some of the finest examples of Islam's minor arts.

Within a few years after the death of al-Nasir, a new group of Mamluks took control of Egypt's destiny. Up to this time the sultans had been either Turks or Mongols who were known as Bahri Mamluks, but, following 1382, a new dynasty of Circassian slaves called the Burji Mamluks were Egypt's leaders. This new group was even more inefficient and bloodthirsty than its predecessors, and the fortunes of the country declined rapidly. Disease, famine, mismanagement, over-taxation and corruption in government combined with the loss of the vital trade monopoly with India to bring about the near economic collapse of Mamluk Egypt. To finance their extravagances, the Mamluks levied excessive taxes on the transit trade from India to Europe. This action was naturally resented and was one of the stimuli that led Vasco da Gama to pioneer a water route to India around the Cape of Good Hope—thus ending Egypt's strategic position as a land bridge for the Indian trade.

After successfully withstanding the onslaughts of both Crusaders and Mongols, the decaying Mamluk dynasty was brought to a final collapse by a new invader from what is present-day Turkey. Originally the Ottoman Turks, so named from their founder Othman I (1299), lived in Mongolia but had drifted into the Byzantine province of Anatolia and had settled there. By 1453 the Ottomans captured Constantinople and had begun moving into Syria. The futile efforts of the Mamluks to halt the surging Turks were finally crushed when, in 1517, the invaders rolled inexorably into Cairo, ending for ever the unique slave dynasty.

This era of Mamluk rule in Egypt and Syria was marked by some important changes in the picture of the Islamic world. The economy which had been based on trade, reverted to a basically feudal system that depended on agriculture for its existence. A more important and far-reaching revolution was the decline in importance of the Arab culture. Since the time of the Fatimids, non-Arab races such

as the Turks and the Mongols had taken over the government of the Islamic countries, pushing the descendants of the original founders of the empire into relative obscurity. Arabic-speaking people lost their independence for nearly a thousand years, regaining it only in the twentieth century.

Thus far we have followed the development and decline of Muslim power in Egypt, Arabia and Syria. At the time when the Fatimids and the Ayyubids were dominant in the south and west, another powerful dynasty arose and collapsed in the Iraq-Persia area. About 970 a group of Oghuz Turks from central Asia made their way into the eastern fringes of Muslim territory. To keep them from moving into Persia the sultan of the area gave one of the tribes some land farther to the west. This attempt at applying the age-old formula of 'divide and conquer' met with complete failure; for the Seljuks, so named after their leader, turned on their erstwhile hosts and destroyed their power for ever.

Following this battle, the Seljuks elected one of their number, Tughril Beg, as leader. Through his brilliant leadership they soon controlled Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Anatolia and established Tughril in Baghdad with the title of al-Sultan, 'he with authority'. The new sultan received two crowns from the Abbasid caliph, showing that he was king both of Persia and Arabia and was 'Sultan of the East and the West'.<sup>1</sup> Although the Seljuks were orthodox in their religious belief, they did not allow the caliph any real power but kept him merely to give themselves an aura of legitimacy.

The Seljuk history that included the reign of Tughril, his nephew, Alp Arslan, and the latter's son, Malikshah, marked the zenith of this dynasty's rule. The armies of the Seljuks, led by Alp Arslan, drove the Byzantines out of most of their Asian holdings, but it is during the reign of Malikshah that the dynasty showed itself at its best. This sultan's era is probably best known because of his far more famous Prime Minister, Nizam al-Mulk, who reorganized the economy of the country from a purely monetary one to a modified feudal system. It was apparent to him that unless the undisciplined troops of the Seljuks had some personal interest in the country's

<sup>1</sup> Ameer Ali: *A Short History of the Saracens*, p. 310. London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1953.

prosperity, they would merely extract money from the inhabitants with no thought of responsibility. In exchange for their loyalty to the throne, Nizam al-Mulk gave the land itself to worthy officers. When the officers realized that their personal fortunes were tied up in the land, they began to take a serious interest in efficiently managing their holdings. Thus with a minimum of effort, the Prime Minister was able to establish a flourishing economy.

Even more far-reaching was Nizam's contribution to culture. In 1065 he provided for the establishment of the Nizamiyah, the first well-organized academy or university in Islam. He also brought about the reformation of the calendar assisted by the famous poet-mathematician Omar Khayyam. Nizam al-Mulk's noteworthy administration was brought to an untimely close by the activities of the infamous 'Assassins'<sup>1</sup> who had entered Islamic history in the latter part of the eleventh century.

In 1090 the leader of the Assassins, Hasan-i-Sabbah, gained control over several virtually inaccessible mountain fortresses in northern Persia and Syria from which he directed his fanatical followers. It was their policy to eliminate by murder any person whose existence they felt was inimicable to their interests—the promulgation of radical Ismailism. This scourge in the heart of the Muslim world was not completely eliminated until the Mongols destroyed it in the thirteenth century.

After the death of Nizam al-Mulk at the hands of the Assassins, the Seljuk empire split up along the lines of the feudal holdings that he instituted. Without a strong man in Baghdad to control the grasping, petty nobles, constant feuds broke out among them; and small, independent provinces replaced the once unified nation. This period of weakness was one of the contributing causes for the initial, and at times recurrent, success enjoyed by the Crusaders. The westerners were able to defeat the individual Muslim principalities and, on occasion, even were able to play one Muslim leader against another.

Although the dynasty's control of a unified empire was at an end, some individual officers, notable among whom was Zangi, were able to set up some semblance of a Seljuk state. However, following Salah al-Din's success in Egypt and Syria, his new dynasty, the Ayyubids,

<sup>1</sup> From the Arabic word *hashashun*, those addicted to *hashish*, a strong narcotic.

took over the petty Seljuk provinces in the east. The remaining Seljuks in Persia were swallowed up by a rising new menace from central Asia.

In the steppe country of Mongolia the savage tribes had been united under the control of Temujin (Ghengis Khan). He was able to subdue China by 1219 and to turn westward to the divided Islamic empire. Within a year Temujin had crossed the Oxus River and swept through Persia with the relentless pressure of a bursting dam. The petty kingdoms that had struggled from the wreckage of the Seljuk empire were thrust aside like so much dust, and the Mongol horde was on its way to Egypt. Pressed as they were on the east by the troops of the Khan and attacked on the west by the Crusaders, the situation looked hopeless for the Muslims. Then, in 1227, the death of Ghengis Khan gave Islam the respite it needed while the Mongols moved eastward to choose a new leader.

Less than twenty-five years later the Mongol pressure again began to make itself felt along the borders of Persia. This time the invasion of the Muslim countries proved to be a forerunner of the scorched earth policy so successfully followed by subsequent armies to the present day. Led by a grandson of Genghis, Hulagu, the Mongols captured the traditional seat of the Abbasid caliphs—Baghdad. Even though he was told that 'if the caliph is killed, the whole universe is disorganized, the sun hides its face, rain ceases and plants grow no more', Hulagu executed the last of the direct line of the Baghdad caliphs—men who had been the spiritual heads of Islam for the previous five hundred years.

Although the Mongols put a stop to intellectual and cultural life for nearly a century in the areas they devastated, they did make a positive contribution to the Muslim world. The invaders from the steppes had no more toleration for the 'Old Man of the Mountains' and his Assassins than had the Muslim dynasties. In a series of surprisingly easy battles, the strongholds of this Ismaili sect were destroyed and the scourge of the previous two centuries was eliminated.

After the Mongols invaded Syria and were checked by the Mamluk, Baybars, they consolidated their gains in Persia and Iraq and settled down to rebuilding the land they had so ruthlessly devastated. This surprising change of policy was effected by the civilizing and stabilizing

influence of Islam. After conquering the Muslim empire, the Mongols found themselves in the position of so many other victors—overcome by the religion and culture of their victims.

As calamitous as was the Mongol invasions of the Islamic countries, their effect was transient in comparison with the next group of conquerors who imposed their rule in the area. These invaders, the Ottoman Turks, moved into mid-Asia Minor following the example of their Seljuk cousins. Othman (hence Ottoman), the first of the line, established his people in the lands formerly held by the Seljuk sultans. Within a few years the territory they controlled stretched from Syria to the Danube. With this area in hand, and following their capture of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans turned their attention to the tottering kingdom of the Mamluks. In 1517, assisted by treachery and artillery, the sultan Salim ended the Mamluk rule of Egypt and eliminated the slave dynasty altogether.

Led by the son of Salim, Sulayman I, the Ottoman empire reached its greatest physical extent and cultural glory. Sulayman the Magnificent, a contemporary of Francis I of France and of Henry VIII of England, extended the borders of his territory from the gates of Vienna to the Persian Gulf and from the Caspian Sea to the first cataract of the Nile. In North Africa, the states of Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers owed their allegiance to the Ottomans, but Morocco remained free of their control.

The Ottomans were able to keep a nominal rule over their empire, but, following the reign of Sulayman, the outlying provinces became more and more independent. The rising desire of the people for national freedom that made itself felt during the nineteenth century and the colonial aims of France and England combined to weaken the Ottomans until they could exert little more than token control over their empire. Harsh, repressive measures by the Ottomans against any social or legal reform caused fierce resentment among their subject people. This short-sighted policy may not have ended the dynasty for many years, but it was combined with the complete military defeat of Turkey and the Central Powers in World War I. These factors joined to cause the collapse of a dynasty which at its zenith rivalled in area the Arab empire of the Umayyads.

To understand the true nature of the Ottoman Empire, some of the underlying factors that influenced its development must be considered. First of all, there were many Western forces that shaped the culture of the Turks: namely, Europeans ruled by the Ottomans, the Byzantine civilization they absorbed, extensive trade relationships and diplomatic interchanges. Secondly, Islam was of vital importance in the formation of the Turkish culture. The Ottomans were strictly orthodox, but, while pious, they were rigid in their interpretation of Islam. In addition to these two main influences, local traditions, customs in art forms, language and the use of Arabic characters in their writing also made their impression on the Turks.

Although all of these influences could have joined in liberalizing the dynasty, such was not the case, for a strong hierarchic system in government and religion developed. The unassailable position of the official exponents of Islam in the community, who themselves were bound by the chains of tradition, left no room for much needed reforms. They interpreted the law in a narrow and intolerant spirit that brooked no questioning nor appeal. These negative features, together with a general distrust of Western culture and the political impotence of the 'Porte' combined to justify the name bestowed on Turkey—'the sick man of Europe'.

It was not until after World War I that Turkey, shorn of its empire, was able to regain stability. This great change for the better was largely the result of one man's tireless work. Kemal Atatürk must be given the credit for restoring Turkey to a highly respected position in the community of nations. To accomplish his purpose, Atatürk ruthlessly eliminated most of the old traditions that for so long had been holding back the progress of his country. To simplify education, the old Arabic script was abolished and replaced by a Latin type alphabet. Similarly, the stranglehold that the misapplication of Islam had exerted was broken, and religious toleration was made the rule of the country. By adopting a form of state socialism, the president was able to make some progress toward prosperity and, at the same time, to remain more or less independent of foreign capital and its concomitant political control.

The rise of modern Turkey on the ashes of the Ottoman empire and the abolishment of the sultanate and the caliphate on March 3, 1924, marked the end of the religio-political empires that had begun



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with Muhammad and the Companions. Until the present at least the independent spirit of the Muslim countries has allowed little progress toward a restoration of an Islamic empire, and it remains for the future to disclose any trend toward this form of co-operation.

#### RECOMMENDED READING

Grunebaum, G. von: *Medieval Islam*. Chicago, 1946.

Lewis, Bernard: *The Arabs in History*. London, 1950.

CHRONOLOGY			IMPORTANT EVENTS	
DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST	
A.D. 868-905	Tulunid Dynasty		Feudalism becomes common in Europe.	
868-883	Ahmad ibn-Tulun	Frees Egypt of Abbasid control; conquers Syria; builds famous Mosque of ibn-Tulun.	Carolingian kings rule the West Franks; Alfred the Great defeats the Danes (878).	
909-1171	Fatimid Dynasty	Founded by a descendant of Fatima, Muhammad's daughter.		
909-934	al-Mahdi Ubaydallah	Proclaims himself caliph and mahdi; conquers all of North Africa except Morocco; replaces Sunnism with Shi'ism.	Abd al-Rahman III rules Spain (912-961); Saxon Dynasty in Germany begins (919-1024).	
969	Jawhar al-Rumi (the Greek)	This military leader founds al-Qahira (Cairo); builds the al-Azhar Mosque.	Otto the Great (962) revives the Roman Empire of the West.	
975-996	Nizar al-Aziz	Controls greatest empire of the time; builds up Cairo; extends favours to Christians.	Capetian kings rule France.	
996-1021	Ali Mansur al-Hakim	Extremely intolerant; destroys Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.	King Canute controls England, Denmark and Norway.	
c. 1050-1171		Hired troops weaken Egypt; famine, plague, corruption make it powerless; Fatimids lose Sicily (1071), Malta (1098), Tripoli (1146).	First Crusade begins (1096); Second Crusade (1147); Roger II rules Sicily (1130-1153).	

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DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	MUSLIM WORLD	IMPORTANT EVENTS	EUROPE AND THE WEST
1171-1250	Ayyubid Dynasty			
1171-1193	Salah al-Din (Saladin)	Takes control of Egypt; restores orthodox Islam; annexes Yemen, Hejaz, Syria and the Sudan; expels Crusaders from most of Holy Land; builds Citadel of Cairo.		Richard Cœur de Lion, Frederick Barbarossa and Phillip II start the Third Crusade.
1250-1517	Mamluk (slave) Dynasty	Founded and ruled by slaves.		
1256-1258		Mongol invasion under Hulagu; destruction of Baghdad.		
1260-1277	al-Zahir Baybars	Defeats the Mongols; ends threat of Crusaders; organizes efficient government, industry and communications; brings Abbasid caliph to Cairo.	Last Crusade begins (1270).	
1293-1294 1298-1308 1309-1340	Nasir al-din Muhammad	Rules Egypt on three separate occasions; constructs canal from Alexandria to the Nile; Egypt reaches a high point in architecture.		Hundred Years' War begins (1337).
956-1194	Seljuk Dynasty	Founded by Seljuk, a Turkoman; rules eastern portion of Muslim world.		
1037-1063	Tughril Beg	Gains control of Iraq, Syria, Palestine and Anatolia; conquers Baghdad; takes title of Sultan.		Henry I controls France (1031-1060).

# ISLAM AND THE ARABS

DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	MUSLIM WORLD	IMPORTANT EVENTS	EUROPE AND THE WEST
1063-1072	Alp Arslan	Ejects Byzantine Empire from most of Asia Minor.		Normans invade England (1066).
1072-1092	Malikshah	Reigns during zenith of Seljuk power and culture; organizes empire; promotes law and order.		
1063-1092	Nizam al-Mulk	This vizier responsible for much of the grandeur of Alp Arslan's and Malikshah's rule; establishes famed Nizamia (university); stimulates all branches of learning; murdered by the Assassins.		
1090-1256	The Assassins	Founded by ibn al-Sabbah; terrorizes the Muslim world; destroyed by Mongols in 1256.	The time of the Crusades.	
1453		Ottomans capture Constantinople.	Granada, the last stronghold of Muslim power in Spain, conquered, 1492	
1517-1922	Ottoman Empire	Controls Muslim world from Algeria to Persia and from Turkey to Yemen.		
1517-1520	Salim I, 'The Grim'	Captures Egypt; ends Mamluk reign; claims title of Caliph-Muhammad's successor.	Henry VIII rules England (1509-1547).	
1520-1566	Sulayman I, 'The Magnificent'	Controls Mediterranean area from Gibraltar to the Euphrates and from Hungary to the Upper Nile.	England breaks with the Papacy (1534).	

# FROM THE CALIPHATE TO THE END OF THE OTTOMANS

DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	MUSLIM WORLD	IMPORTANT EVENTS	EUROPE AND THE WEST
1529		Sulayman I besieges Vienna; annexes Hungary to his empire.		Cortez conquers Mexico (1521).
1659	Algeria	Becomes almost independent of Ottoman control; Ottoman's lose Hungary.		Pilgrims reach America (1620).
1705	Tunisia	Throws off domination of Turkey.		Queen Anne's War (War of the Spanish succession, 1702-1713).
1783		Russia seizes Crimea from Turkey.		U.S.-British peace treaty gives colonies freedom.
1798		Napoleon invades Egypt.		French Revolution begins (1789).
1805	Muhammad Ali	Makes Egypt almost independent of Ottoman control.		Battle of Waterloo (1815).
1826	Mahmud II	Kills the mutinous Janissaries to break their power in Ottoman Empire.		
1828		Greece free from Turkish rule.		
1866		Rumania becomes independent after three centuries of Ottoman domination.		U.S. Civil War (1861-1865).
1918		Allies defeat Central Powers throughout the Near East.		
1924		Ottoman Caliphate ends officially.		

## CHAPTER 5

### THE CRUSADES

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**I**F the Middle Ages are regarded as an age of faith and war, the Crusades are their fullest and most awful expression. Undoubtedly the European medieval mind regarded the Crusades as holy wars for a holy cause. In Islam no general jihad was declared against the Crusaders, and the Caliphate, as head of secular life, did not direct the wars. In the West, however, the Pope as spiritual head did identify himself with the cause. As a religious movement the Crusades revealed, through fanaticism and bigotry, all the worst aspects of medieval Christianity. The holy wars succeeded in creating a gulf between East and West, rather than reinforcing the bridge between two cultures that ultimately shared common theistic concepts and innumerable cultural interests. By failing to provide a united front against the real threat that came from the Mongol East, the Crusades served only to divide the world into two hostile spheres. The tragic division initiated by the Crusades persists to the present day, preventing a healthy cultural and political fusion of the Western and Arab civilizations.

A sense of unity in the West was derived chiefly from joint action and attack against the Near East. Europe needed an escape from poverty and disease, and the migratory movement from West to East in search of more opulent lands was initiated by the Normans and Franks. Thus the Christian concept of Western unity arose from an attitude that in modern terms must be called one of colonialism. The religious motive went hand in hand with an economic one. Together they led to the founding of an authoritative colonialism from which so much of nineteenth-century European prestige was derived.

If it is true that the Crusading movement stimulated commerce between East and West, trade could have flourished independently.

Confronted with a civilization that both materially and culturally was infinitely higher, the Crusaders brought back to Europe products such as sugar, silks, incense, spices and dyes, and the institution of gold coinage and methods of banking. In military architecture both East and West benefited from an exchange of ideas.

In general, though, the Arabs benefited little from their contacts with the Crusaders. All they found in the latter were greed, intolerance and a mania for war and destruction. Even today the Arab's picture of Western man is not completely free from impressions left by the Crusaders on the Arab mind.

Christians of the West turned toward the East as though pulled by a magnet. Traditionally it was the East that produced material luxuries and refinements of life. Christianity being at first an Eastern religion, recognized the East as the centre of religious attractions, too. As early as the third century, the cave at Bethlehem where Christ was born, the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane were places visited for the purpose of prayer and for acquiring spiritual rewards. Saint Jerome himself settled in Palestine where he drew around him a coterie of the faithful. Indeed, the majority of the early Christian saints and martyrs had been easterners, and it became a natural tendency of Christian practice to want to venerate these men by making a pilgrimage to the places of their activity.

It was not long before the belief in the virtue of relics arose. Because the most holy of all relics, those of Christ, remained in the East, at first in Jerusalem and later in Constantinople, it was necessary for pilgrims to travel, often from far off in the West, in order to worship where they believed the Divine had sanctified the earth. If a pilgrim were lucky, he might return to his home with a minor relic—a holy souvenir. Sometimes a complete expedition would be organized for the purpose of obtaining that kind of treasure. The citizens of Langres possessed a finger of Saint Mamas. A lady from Maurienne returned with the thumb of St John the Baptist. Her countrymen who were inspired to make a pilgrimage might see St John's body at Samaria or his head at Damascus. By the end of the fourth century, Jerusalem already possessed so many sacred places that a pilgrim could not visit them all in a single day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Steven Runciman: *History of the Crusades*, I, 41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

A shock to Christendom was the invasion of Palestine by the Persians in 614. Aided by the Jewish inhabitants, they succeeded in capturing the city, and then sent the Holy Cross and the instruments of the Passion as gifts to the Christian Queen of Persia. In 622, Heraclius, after solemn religious ceremonies, left Constantinople to wage a war against the Infidel. The expedition was successful. Jerusalem was recaptured and the true cross was restored to the city, to the great joy of all Christians. Mindful of the treachery of the Jews, Heraclius ordered their compulsory baptism within the empire. As a result, zealous Christians found an excuse for an open massacre of the hated race. In historical sequence, this holy war against the Infidel was a crusade that preceded the 'First Crusade' of Pope Urban in the eleventh century.

Just five years after the death of the Prophet, both Syria and Palestine were under Muslim domination. In 637 Jerusalem capitulated on the condition that the Caliph Umar should receive the surrender in person. In 638 Umar entered the city dressed in tattered robes and equipped with only a sack of barley, a bag of dates, a water-skin and a single slave as his escort. Showing wisdom in a policy of clemency, he took great pains to see that Christian churches were left intact, and to secure the safety of the holiest sanctuary in Christendom, the church of the Holy Sepulchre. When the caliph asked to visit the shrine, the hour for Muslim prayer approached. He took his prayer rug outside to the porch of Martyrion, for fear that his zealous followers might claim for Islam the church where he had prayed. The Prophet Muhammad himself had said that Christians and Jews alike were People of the Book and that they should be permitted to retain their places of worship unhindered.

Unlike the Christian Empire which sought to enforce religion uniformly on all its citizens, the Arabs recognized and accepted religious minorities. Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians were known as *dhimmis*, or protected peoples. Their freedom of worship was assured by the *jizya*, a capitation tax which later became a tax paid in lieu of military service. This tax plus the *Gharaj*, or land tax, together were still far lower than taxes levied under Byzantine rule. Each of the religious sects was treated as a *milet*, that is, as a semi-autonomous community within the state. Each *milet* was under its religious



leader, who in turn was responsible for its behaviour to the Arab government.

Indeed, there was little ground for Christian complaint in the Arab regime that immediately followed the conquest of Syria and Palestine. A stable government had been established and commerce flourished. There was a period of prosperity, too, in the development of the Hellenistic culture of the near Orient. Christian artists and craftsmen worked harmoniously with their Muslim and Jewish colleagues for their Arab masters. The magnificent Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem was completed in 691 for the Caliph Abdul-Malik. Such favourable conditions created by Islam, the faith of the new ruling class, were conducive to the conversion of Christians. A hundred years after the conquest, Syria, whose population had been predominantly heretic Christian, was a chiefly Muslim country.

The steady stream of Christian pilgrims from the West throughout the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries continued unobstructed. Charlemagne, when he showed an interest in the welfare of the holy places, was encouraged to make foundations at Jerusalem and to send alms to its Church. He promoted more active communication with the East, and in the Caliph Harun al-Rashid he recognized an ally against Byzantium. Although Charlemagne's position as legal protector of the Orthodox in Palestine was short-lived, legend served to magnify the fact; and the basis, however weak, for the claim of the Franks of future generations to rule in Jerusalem was established.

A brief reversal of the traditional Muslim policy of co-existence with religious minorities was instituted by the Caliph Al-Hakim at the opening of the eleventh century. At the beginning of that era, Jerusalem was subject to the Fatimid Caliph of Cairo, Abu Ali Mansur al-Hakim, the son of a Christian mother and a product of a Christian upbringing, who succeeded to the caliphate in 996 as a boy of 11. As he reached manhood he developed an abnormal strain and reacted violently against his heritage. Christians found themselves persecuted as well as Jews. He confiscated Church property and ordered the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to be destroyed. When in 1016 he proclaimed himself creator of the universe, he did a turnabout face and favoured Christians and Jews while he persecuted the Muslims. In all

probability his death in 1021 was the result of a murder instigated by his sister.

Far worse for the Latin West than the arbitrary persecutions by the mad Hakim was the capture of Jerusalem by the Seljukian Turks in 1071. Ignorant and fanatical barbarians, the Turkish hordes had come from the east and crossed the Volga into the Black Sea steppes. One branch of the Ghuzy, named Seljuk after the ancestor of their chief, conquered all of Persia under Tughril Beg, accepted Islam and entered the service of the Abbasid caliphs at Baghdad. The Seljuks, or at least their leaders, for the most part were not completely immune to cultural contacts with Muslim civilization. Though a rougher race than the Fatimids of Egypt whom they displaced, the Seljuks were intelligent enough to make use of the more astute minds of their subjects.

The seeds of dissolution, however, were contained within the Seljuk empire. In 1092 at the death of its last great ruler, Malikshah, civil war broke out among his sons and the empire split into many separate principalities. A considerably weakened state of affairs brought about by contending dynasties provided the opportune time for the appearance of Christians with the sword. But even before the Crusaders appeared at the gates of the sacred city in 1099, the Egyptians had succeeded in driving the Seljuks out of Jerusalem.

With the dream of a universal Church subject to control by the papacy, Pope Gregory VII had actually considered organizing an expedition to rescue the Eastern empire as early as 1071, after the disastrous battle of Manzikert. But when the Seljuk empire broke up, the Byzantine emperor, Alexius I Comnenus, sent envoys to Pope Urban II in 1094 asking for auxiliary mercenary troops to help him reconquer Asia Minor from the Turks. His wildest imagination could not have pictured the stream of events that followed his petition.

The crusading spirit already stirring among the 'barbarous Franks' crystallized into a holy war at Urban's pronouncements in 1095 at Clermont-Ferrand. The chief aim was not to aid the Byzantines, but to conquer Palestine. Peace at home was to be guaranteed by a three years' truce for Crusaders' possessions. All who participated in the

war that 'God willed' would receive the blessing of the Church and full remission of sins—eternal reward.

The success of this call to arms was immediate and complete. Within a year many thousands were recruited to undertake a crusade. The word 'crusade', derived from the practice of 'taking the cross'—after the example and precept of Christ—was adopted by those who went on the First Crusade, and was then followed in the subsequent expeditions. The cross of cloth worn on the Crusader's clothing was the symbol of his vow. The Crusades were initiated by the Pope, but feudal states, monarchies and city republics of western Europe took part in the movement. Their immediate goal was Jerusalem.

However genuine the religious motive of acquiring spiritual merit must have been for many Crusaders, it is the vision of worldly conquest that explains more correctly the combination of forces set in motion. Reconquest of lost territories from Muslims by Christian powers had progressed steadily for more than a hundred years before the First Crusade. Robert Guiscard and his brother Roger had invaded Muslim Sicily; in Spain Christian princes were regaining lands from the Muslims. Indeed, the Pope need scarcely have raised his voice to the call, for about this time adventure-loving feudalism would have developed its own zeal for armed expeditions. France was overpopulated, and famines and plagues were frequent. Any escape might be welcome, especially one into lands that hearsay had turned into an earthly paradise.

Feudal laws of succession produced a numerous class of landless and unemployable younger sons who were eager to carve out for themselves estates in new lands. Venice, Genoa, Pisa and other commercial Italian coastal cities were stimulated to acquire the products of the East more directly and cheaply. They might achieve these ends if their domination could be extended to the eastern Mediterranean.

Organized in France by a Pope of French descent, the Crusades began and continued as an essentially French enterprise, laying the 'spiritual' foundations for nineteenth-century French colonialism. Although the French king was under papal excommunication, the feudal nobility from both northern and southern France and from Norman Italy were quick to respond and took the cross with avidity. Peter the Hermit was instrumental in recruiting the common people of central France and the Rhine Valley.

The first part of the Crusade was called the Crusade of the People. But of five independent and ill-led divisions that took their inspiration from the Hermit, only two succeeded in reaching Constantinople. Two were destroyed by Hungarians whom they had plundered. A third began the Crusade tradition by plundering and massacring some ten thousand Jews in Rhineland towns. The unorganized bands that reached Asia Minor were easily dispersed by the Seljuk Turks.

The later armies composed mostly of Franks and Normans under their own princes met at Constantinople in the spring of 1107. Godfrey of Bouillon, with his brother Baldwin, led the Crusaders of Lorraine; Raymond of Toulouse led the Provençals; and Bohemund of Otranto, with his nephew Tancred, the Normans. After swearing fealty to the Emperor Alexius, the princes with their armies lost no time in engaging the Seljuks in battle. The weakened Seljuk Turks relinquished first Nicaea and then Antioch. They had already given up Jerusalem to the Fatimids who refused to surrender it to the Crusaders. In 1099, after a siege of the city lasting two months, the Christians stormed Jerusalem with the fervent joy of fanatical victors and massacred the Muslims indiscriminately, men, women and children alike, whether in their homes or at the mosques. Christians 'sobbing for joy' continued their butchery until the city was emptied of all its Muslim and Jewish inhabitants. Such wholesale annihilation in the name of Christ could not help but impress the world. Centuries have not erased the stain.

With the kingdom of Jerusalem as the centre of crusading activities, western Christendom marched on to claim an insignificant strip of territory bordering the eastern end of the Mediterranean from the Euphrates to Egypt. But the Latins were seldom able to penetrate more than fifty miles inland from the coast. The strategic cities of Aleppo or Damascus, for example, were never secured. There was only a small permanent body of men-at-arms that remained to defend the new conquests, though a steady stream of militant pilgrims continued to proffer reinforcements even when there was no actual 'crusade' in progress. Small numbers of mercenary forces were also supplied by the Italian trading towns of Venice and Genoa, which found commercial trade with Syria profitable.

The Latin kingdom in Syria looked much like a cross-section of

feudal France transplanted beyond the seas. The various isolated garrisons existed on nothing but lawless greed; and it was common practice in lustful desire for unlawful gain to capture Muslims and to hold them for ransom or to plunder caravans. The Latins were never able successfully to induce men of the West to emigrate to the Holy Land and build up a Christian nation of Europeans. If their anomalous state were to endure, even for a brief period, it required the goodwill at least of the Levantine Christians, but this, too, it failed to gain.

The Muslim capture of Edessa in 1144 marked the beginning of the decline of the Latin kingdom and the beginning of the Second Crusade. St Bernard, again in France, preached a crusade in which Louis VII (1121–1180) and Conrad III (1093–1152), Kings of France and Germany, participated. Their armies were almost annihilated while crossing Asia Minor; the result was that the Second Crusade failed to accomplish anything. In fact it was only a matter of time until the kingdom of Jerusalem itself toppled.

After Islam found a measure of unity in a great general and diplomat, Yusuf ibn-Ayyub Salah al-Din (Saladin), 1138–1193, the recovery of Jerusalem was assured. In 1171 he had succeeded in bringing to an end the Fatimid rule in Egypt, and all of Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt lay at his command. In 1187 Jerusalem capitulated, but the victory was in sharp contrast to the massacres committed by Christians eighty-eight years before. In an orderly and humane occupation, no Christians were harmed, no buildings were looted. Those Christians who were able to do so raised money for securing their complete freedom. If the Orders of the Temple and Hospital and the Church had not been so niggardly, many thousands of Christians might have been spared slavery.<sup>1</sup> As it was, the magnanimous Saladin released captive husbands and gave gifts to widows and orphans from his own treasury.

In 1189 western Christendom sought by a Third Crusade to aid its Levantine Kingdom, which was now reduced to the ports of Antioch, Tripoli and Tyre. But even with the assistance of such illustrious figures as Frederick Barbarossa (1152–1190), King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor; Philip Augustus of France (1165–1223); and

<sup>1</sup> Steven Runciman: *History of the Crusades*, I, 22.

Richard Cœur de Lion of England (1157-1199); the Crusade failed to do little more than recover Cyprus and a strip of the Levant coast with the maritime city of Acre. A distinguishing feature of the Third Crusade was a closer relationship between Christian and Muslim. Richard had won the respect of the chivalrous Saladin, who sent him snow and fruit when he was ill with fever. Another case in point was the proposal that Saladin's brother should marry Richard's sister Johanna. If the marriage did not actually take place, at least in 1192 a treaty was signed which was followed by a period of peace. The coastal cities as far south as Jaffa went to the Christians. Pilgrims were permitted to visit freely the holy places, and Muslims and Christians could pass through each other's lands.

In spite of the thaw in Christian-Muslim antagonism, the Christians could hardly stand the thought of Jerusalem under Muslim administration; and a Fourth Crusade was preached early in the thirteenth century, especially in northern France and Flanders. To avoid the long route by land, the predominantly French army haggled with the Venetians for transportation to Egypt or Palestine. On their arrival at Venice the Crusaders were unable to pay the sum agreed upon for their passage. They were soon persuaded to 'earn' their passage by taking a detour and attacking first the Adriatic city of Zara, which the Venetians coveted from the King of Hungary. Not only did Crusader find himself fighting fellow-Christian who had no grievances against him, but he was incited even to sack and destroy the Greeks of Constantinople. For sheer destructiveness there is nothing so tragic among crimes of history to compare with the capture of Constantinople in 1204. Once again the Latins showed their true colours.

Successive waves of Christians during the next two centuries resulted in many different crusades. Often, because the fighting was continuous, it is impossible to distinguish them conveniently by number. In 1212 there was a pathetic crusading movement among children who hoped to succeed where sinners had failed. A peasant boy in France led thousands to Marseilles where the sea was expected to open, as the Red Sea had for the children of Israel. By dastardly ruses of shipowners, the children were kidnapped and sold into slavery in Egypt. Nicolas, a youth from Cologne, gathered some

twenty thousand followers; but like the children led by the Pied Piper of Hamelin, they were never heard from again.<sup>1</sup>

The King of Hungary and the Duke of Austria began the Fifth Crusade, in 1217, by going to Syria; and in the following four years an expedition was sent to the Nile delta. The unsuccessful attempt to conquer Egypt brought an end to the crusade with no more positive gain than the winning back of the Holy Cross.

Frederick II (1194–1250), Holy Roman Emperor and King of Sicily, was urged repeatedly by Pope Innocent III to take up a crusade. Like his grandfather Roger II of Sicily (1130–1154), Frederick Hohenstaufen maintained a half-Oriental, half-Western court and carried on friendly political and commercial relations with the Muslims. As one of the most intellectually curious and gifted of medieval rulers, he encouraged the translation into Latin of Arabic science and philosophy. In 1224 he founded the University of Naples where St Thomas Aquinas (1226–1274) studied the Arabic commentators on Greek philosophers. His kingdom of Sicily surpassed in prosperity and civilization all its neighbours in Europe.

Thanks to Frederick's peaceful measure of a treaty-compromise in 1228, with the Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt, al Kamil, the Sixth Crusade resulted in the abandonment of Jerusalem and the country between it and the coast. The reconstituted kingdom of Jerusalem lasted until 1244 when, due to the Christians' own miscalculations, it was lost until the twentieth century. They chose to ally themselves with the ruler of Damascus against the Sultan of Egypt, and, in 1244, they were defeated in the battle of Gaza by Rukin ad-Din Baybars (1233–1277), the future Mamluk Sultan of Egypt. In the same year Jerusalem was captured by the Charismians, who were Turanian nomads akin to the Turks.

The Turanians, who themselves had been driven into Asia Minor and Syria by Mongols, were a terrible threat to Muslims and Christians alike. But if they were uncouth and uncivilized invaders, the real danger to the civilized world was the Mongol hordes. Pagan Turanians from the steppes of eastern Asia who had been unconverted to Islam and untouched by Muslim culture as the Turks had been to some degree, the Mongols engulfed China and all central

<sup>1</sup> Barker, Ernest: 'The Crusades', in *The Legacy of Islam*, p. 75. London: Oxford University Press, 1925.

Asia destroying empires before them. Their leader, Temuchin (Genghiz Khan, 1167-1227), created an invincible war machine that wrought immeasurable harm.

From a logical and rational point of view we might suppose that the Christians would have allied themselves with the treaty-keeping Muslims to halt the Mongol scourge to humanity. Indeed, it lay within their power to effect such a scheme; yet we find that almost the opposite happened. The religious leader of Christendom, Pope Innocent IV, sent two embassies to Mongolia. The pious St Louis had consistently refused to negotiate with the Muslims in any way, yet he did not consider it beneath his religious convictions to send two Dominicans to deal with the pagan Mongols.

Needless to say, the Asian hordes were out only for conquest and had no intention of permitting any kind of Christian state. They helped the Christians only indirectly by invading the Muslim world and contributing to the misery of mankind. The civilization of the Near East would never again illumine the world.

In 1253, under Hulagu (1217-1265), the grandson of Genghiz, the Mongols invaded South Persia, and in 1258 Baghdad was captured. Eighty thousand citizens were killed, and the city was virtually destroyed. The countryside, through the destruction of marvellous irrigation systems, has today still not recovered its former fertility. The Abbasid caliphate was ended; Arab unity was broken. Asiatic Christians, confusing ends with means, were jubilant. But their joy was short-lived, and they were soon to be visited by their Nemesis. Syria became the final testing ground between Mongol and Muslim; the Latin kingdom fell to the victor.

In 1249 the Seventh Crusade, which resulted in the capture and ransom of St Louis, had been directed not against the lost Jerusalem, but against Egypt. The Mamluks were the one unbeaten Muslim power. The Mongols had taken Baghdad, Aleppo and Damascus, but they were stopped at the decisive battle of Ain Jalut by the Egyptian Sultan Kutuz in 1260. Islam and western Asia were saved from the most fearful menace they had ever had to face. For the next two centuries the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt became the chief power in the Near East until the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

One by one the last flickerings of crusading power were extin-



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guished—Antioch, Tripoli and finally Acre in 1291. But institutions die slowly, and crusades at the international level continued for at least another century. One last act of the invaders' villainy was the sack of Alexandria in 1365. The massacres that accompanied it compare only with those of Jerusalem in 1099 and Constantinople in 1204. Indeed, through the years the Crusaders had learned little in their acts of intolerance in the name of God.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Runciman, Steven: *History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. Cambridge, 1951–1954.  
Setton, Kenneth M, ed.. *History of the Crusades*. Philadelphia, 1956.

CHRONOLOGY			IMPORTANT EVENTS	
DATES	MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST		
611-622	Heradius I (610-641) Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire.	Persians invade Palestine, sack Jerusalem and carry off the Holy Cross.	Muhammad (570-632).	
622-630	'Byzantine Crusade'	Heradius defeats the Persians and restores Holy Cross.	Pilgrimages from the West during seventh, eighth and ninth centuries.	
637	Caliph Umar	Jerusalem falls to Muslims who treat Christians and Jews with tolerance.	Dome of Rock completed in 691.	
996-1021	Al-Hakim	Persecution of Christians and Jews by mad Fatimid Caliph; Church of the Holy Sepulchre destroyed.	King Canute controls England, Denmark and Norway.	
1071	Alp Arslan	Battle of Manzikert permits Seljuk Turks to invade Asia Minor.	Norman conquest of Sicily.	
1095	Pope Urban II	First Crusade proclaimed at Clermont-Ferrand.	William II rules England (1087-1100).	
1099	Godfrey of Bouillon; Baldwin; Raymond of Toulouse; Bohemund of Otranto.	Christians capture Jerusalem.		
1144	St Bernard; Louis VII (1121-1180); Conrad III (1093-1152).	Fall of Edessa renews interest in crusades, Second Crusade begins.	Roger II rules Sicily (1130-1153).	

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DATES	IMPORTANT EVENTS		
	MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST	
1187	Saladin	Jerusalem recovered by the Muslims.	Oxford University (1167).
1189	Frederick Barbarossa, King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor; Philip II of France; Richard Coeur de Lion.	Third Crusade.	
1202-1204	Fourth Crusade	Crusaders sack Constantinople (1204).	
1212	Children's Crusade		Magna Charta (1215).
1217-1221	Innocent III	Fifth Crusade.	
1228	Frederick II Gregory IX	Sixth Crusade.	
1249-1254	St Louis	Seventh Crusade.	
1270	Louis IX Edward of England.	Eighth Crusade.	Capture of Baghdad by Hulagu (1268).

## CHAPTER 6

### THE MAGHREB (MOROCCO, ALGERIA, TUNISIA)

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#### I. MOROCCO

THE countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, although sharing a common heritage of language and religion with the lands of the Middle East, developed their own distinctive history and culture. This fact makes it necessary to devote a chapter to them, particularly to the 'land of the farthest west'—Maghreb al-Aksa, namely, Morocco.

Morocco's specific geographical position and its relative isolation from the surrounding world enabled it to develop an individual culture and civilization during a period when Algeria and Tunisia were continually being overrun by invading armies and foreign dynasties. The Maghreb was not a crossroads of commerce or war to the same extent as were the lands of the eastern Mediterranean. The Atlantic to the west and the Mediterranean to the north, the vast Sahara on the south and mountains and desert to the east combined to protect Morocco from the waves of foreign invasions that swept again and again through the rest of the Muslim world.

This relative isolation, lasting from the late seventh century until the beginning of the twentieth century, together with the presence of an exceptionally virile population of a markedly martial disposition, namely the Berbers, allowed Morocco to develop a way of life that was peculiarly its own.

As important for the shaping of Moroccan history as geography was the innate character of its people, a character dominated by no other element as potently as that of passion. Passion lay at the back of the fighting qualities of the Berbers who, throughout Moroccan history, provided the military element. If they were co-operative with the government—the Makhzen—then the sultan and his court were

able to unify the country. On the other hand, when the Berber tribes were not disposed to support the government, a state of organized confusion existed that hampered national growth and unity.

Equally determining for the character of Moroccan history was the native passion for independence. Among the Berbers that passion led to an exaggerated tribalism and a concern for the preservation of the individuality and independence of the tribe. This inevitably implied independence from the central authority of the sultan and his government—the Makhzen. When the Arabs came to the Maghreb, they were compelled to leave behind them some of their strong tribal ties. Gradually their former tribal allegiance made room for a sense of national allegiance. This, together with the Arabs' instinctive love of freedom, made them passionately jealous of their national independence. Because of their more intellectual bent of mind, their greater articulateness and sophistication, the Arab became the spokesman for this urge toward independence, an urge which was shared by Berbers, intellectually less complicated and less articulate than their Arab brothers.

The third channel through which Moroccan passion was always wont to express itself was that of religion. That passion was shared by Arab and Berber alike, and it made of religion one of the chief formative forces in the country's history. Both Arabs and Berbers joined in devotion to the sultan as the centre toward which their religious life focused. As a Shereef—a descendant of Muhammad—he was the possessor of the power to bless and to do good, and, as such, was revered and honoured even when not politically obeyed; for his spiritual authority was of infinitely greater consequence than the secular.

The history of Morocco is long and varied, and goes back far beyond the Arab invasions of the seventh century. Archaeologists have uncovered evidences of human occupation in this area that probably date back some fifty thousand years. In legend, such figures as Atlas, Antaeus and Hercules appear in the north-west corner of Morocco, and, as evidence of this, we find such topographical place-names as the Pillars of Hercules and the Atlas Mountains. In the fifth century B.C. the historian Herodotus mentioned this area; and such important figures as Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy wrote about

Morocco. Carthage established a colony at Tingis (Tangier), and the Romans occupied outposts in parts of northern Morocco, but never at any time were they able to conquer the whole country. Under the direction of Octavian, Tingis became an imperial city and the capital of the Roman province of Mauritania Tingitana—from which comes our name for the Maghreb, Morocco. With the exception of the Roman ruins at Volubilis near the city of Meknes, little remains to show evidence of the centuries of Roman occupation. Following the collapse of Roman power in Morocco, a confused period of Vandal and Goth invasions from Spain characterized the history of the country until the middle of the seventh century.

During all of these foreign occupations the Berbers were comparatively unaffected. The name *Berber* came into Western usage during the Roman period and was derived from the Latin word for barbarian. However, the Berbers do not think of themselves under this term, but call themselves Imazirhen—freemen or nobles. Many writers have spoken incorrectly of a Berber nation as if it were one people with a common language. Actually they are little more than groups that might be said to have some cousinly similarities. Before their conversion to Islam, the Berbers were primarily nature and idol worshippers intermixed with a few Christians and Jewish families. As Muslims, the Berbers would often become fanatical adherents to Islam, without, however, abandoning entirely some of their pagan beliefs. These pagan ideas modified not only their own practice of Islam, but also those of their Arab neighbours. Both in the religious and the racial make-up the combination of Arab and Berber contributed to giving Morocco a character distinctive from that of any other Islamic country.

The Islamic invasion of Morocco was the continuation of the spread of Muslim forces across North Africa that started within a decade of Muhammad's death. Under the leadership of Uqbah ibn-Nafi in 660 the armies of the Ummayyads were able to penetrate the Berber lands, the holdings of the Byzantines, and those of the Visigoths all the way to the shores of the Atlantic. However, so precarious was Muslim control in North Africa that not until the opening of the eighth century was any kind of permanent occupation effected. In 701 another Ummayyad general, Musa ibn-Nusair, subjugated

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Tunisia, moved into Morocco, and occupied Tangier. For the better part of eighty years the Berbers resisted the attempts of the Muslims to control them, and it was not until the coming of a descendant of Muhammad that they agreed to co-operate in any way with the Arab invaders.

When the Ummayyad dynasty collapsed in the east and was replaced by the Abbasids, a member of the ruling family who had to flee for his life was a young man named Idris. He escaped to the Maghreb and was accepted by the Arabs and Berbers as a shereef in 788, and was able to consolidate much of Morocco into one country that recognized his control. However, even then the Berbers only submitted themselves to him and his descendants as religious leaders and not always as political rulers. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, this heritage of divided allegiance forced the various dynasties to wage continual campaigns against dissident tribes in an effort to make them support the central government with taxes and troops.

Idris I lived only three years as ruler, and upon his death was succeeded by his son, Idris II, who provided the country with a good administration and founded the capital city of Fez. His successors did little to command our attention, and nothing need to be said of them and the several rival dynasties that succeeded each other for the next century.

At about the time the Normans invaded England, a powerful dynasty was supplanting the divided families that had succeeded the Idrisis. In common with most of the major dynasties of Morocco, the Almoravides began as a religious movement. They came from the south, as did in fact several of the later dynasties. In the tenth century a leader of the Sanhaja tribe of the Berbers enlisted the aid of a religious reformer to teach his people; to do this, the religious leader established a kind of military monastery called 'ribat' from which sprang a religio-military nucleus that soon controlled all of Morocco and most of Spain.

Under the leadership of Yussuf ibn-Tashfin, the members of the ribats, the Morabtis, began to spread from the south of Morocco, capturing the cities of the Idrisis and forcing the population to submit to Almoravide rule. Ibn-Tashfin turned his first military camp in the desert into what is now the city of Marrakesh, and from

there his fame spread throughout North Africa and Spain. The latter country was split between Arab rulers and Christian kings who had been maintaining an uneasy peace that had finally broken down into active warfare. The Arab kingdoms were weak and, for self-preservation, requested the powerful Berber forces of ibn-Tashfin to come to their assistance. After some feigned reluctance the Morabti leader, at the head of a strong Berber army, subdued the Christian kingdoms and annexed them, along with his erstwhile allies, to his Moroccan empire.

During the remaining years of Almoravide rule, ibn-Tashfin's son and grandson vainly attempted to emulate the success of their predecessor. Their family's rule had started as a religious reform movement, and they were fated to be supplanted by a movement of a like nature and a dynasty that proved much stronger than themselves. The Almoravides contributed some positive elements to the life of Morocco, not the least of which was the unification of Islam. They eliminated the Shi'ite sectarianism of the Idrisis and revitalized the practice of Islam through the agency of their religious brotherhoods. They were also able to impose a strong central control on the independent tribes and to break down the divisive spirit that would have prevented any expansion of Moroccan power into Spain. Probably the most far-reaching contribution of this dynasty was one which may have weakened it—the introduction and transmission of the sophisticated culture that the Arabs were developing in Spain. That culture, which was to become the essence of the greatness of Moorish Spain and of Morocco, was absorbed too quickly by the unsophisticated Berbers, and led to a preoccupation with luxury and learning to the detriment of positive measures of governmental administration.

Even while the Almoravides were in control of Morocco and Spain, a new force was forming in the south that subsequently was to rule over the whole of North Africa and that far outshone the previous dynasty. Muhammad ibn-Tumart (born c. 1075), a native of southern Morocco, had spent ten years in the Middle East as a religious student and would-be reformer. Settling among the Masmuda tribes of the Atlas mountains, he was able to impress them with his learning and religious zeal and to gain a strong following. He organized a state of distinctly democratic character that was based on strict Islamic morality. There can be no doubt as to ibn-Tumart's genius as an



organizer nor to the superiority of his government system over those preceding either in Spain or in North Africa.

In the midst of all of his administrative duties he never forgot his primary duty as a religious reformer. So important did he consider the concept of the absolute unity of God that he named his followers Muwahhidi—the believers in the oneness and spirituality of God. This name was changed into the corrupt Spanish version—Almohade—by which Morocco's most distinguished dynasty came to be known. Ibn-Tumart gathered more and more adherents until he was able to challenge the power of the Almoravides. Along with his pupil, the real founder of the dynasty, Abd al-Mumin, ibn-Tumart began conquering the holdings of the tottering Almoravides; and although he died during the second battle against them, it took only ten years to overcome any serious opposition to the new movement.

Abd al-Mumin, a more martial figure than his mentor, soon was able to conquer all of Muslim Spain and to eliminate all opposition in Morocco. His forces were not content with regaining the area occupied by previous Moorish dynasties but struck eastward through Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Abd al-Mumin became so powerful and so sure of the support of his people that he was able to proclaim himself caliph and to take the title Amir al-Muminin—the Prince of the Faithful. His triumph was short-lived, for he died in 1163—the year he became caliph. Even in death, however, his ability was in evidence, for he had been far-sighted enough to establish firmly his dynasty and to nominate his son as successor.

The most important of the Almohade sultans was Yakub al-Mansur, Abd al-Mumin's grandson, who ruled from 1184 to 1199. This extremely orthodox leader controlled an area stretching from the Sahara to Spain and from the Atlantic to the western border of Egypt. However, its great size made the empire unwieldy and helped to promote rebellions which ultimately weakened it to a point of collapse. Many of the important contributions of the Almohade dynasty to Moroccan development are the direct result of the enlightened rule of al-Mansur and his predecessor al-Mumin. Just a part of his contribution was the integration of Berber and Arab elements in the army, an excellent system of provincial administration that stabilized the state, and some architectural treasures—the Kutubia at Marrakesh and the Giralda Tower at Seville. Under the

Almohades, trade with foreign lands was stimulated and an economic treaty was signed with Pisa. Ibn-Rushd, ibn-Tufail and other distinguished scholars were encouraged by the Almohades in their work, and it was in Morocco that ibn-Rushd wrote his epoch-making commentaries on Aristotle that were to leave a profound mark on Western philosophy in general and on Christian Scholasticism in particular.

The fate of the Almohades was similar to that of dynasties before their time and after. Ibn-Tumart's empire was developed by the founder of the dynasty, was maintained for a short time by his two successors, but was finally weakened by less forceful rulers. Within a few years after the death of Yakub al-Mansur, a virile, nomadic Berber tribe, the Beni Marin or Merinid, began conquering the area that is now Algeria. Not content with their initial success, the Merinids overran Fez and pushed southward through Morocco. Yakub II, the greatest of the Merinids, captured Marrakesh, completed the conquest of the country, and attempted to re-establish the greatness of Morocco. His most important contribution to the life of the country was the construction of an addition to the ancient city of Fez which he called White or New Fez.

It was during the time of the Merinids that Portugal was able to gain a foothold in several coastal towns. Ceuta on the Mediterranean and Mazagan on the Atlantic were among the ports that fell into their hands. Tangier was attacked by Prince Henry the Navigator and was lost to the Moroccans for a short time. If the Merinids had not tried to emulate the success of their predecessors in conquest, they might possibly have withstood the attacks of the invaders and preserved their empire. As it was, the Merinids tried to reconquer Spain and to extend the boundaries of their country to the limits that had been reached by the Almohades—an abortive attempt which wasted their strength and left them unable to rule their country efficiently or to protect themselves from foreign powers.

Even though the military successes of the Merinids do not compare with those of the Almohades, the new dynasty left its distinctive mark upon Moroccan culture. The great historian ibn-Khaldun was employed both as vizier and as recorder of Moroccan history at the court of the Merinids. Among the numerous schools they built are

the beautiful medersas of Fez; they encouraged the production of books; they codified religious laws and gave the final form to religious festivals that have always played an important part in Moroccan life. A great deal in the refined manners of the Moroccans, in the civilization of their cities and in their mores in general is due to the Merinids.

As the Merinids became more and more ineffectual after a rule of several centuries, the Portuguese grew bolder until they had occupied much of the sea-coast. Many of the Berbers, too, felt the loosening of control and regained their tribal independence. At this juncture the first Arab dynasty since the Idrisis made its appearance in the southern part of the country. During the fourteenth century a Shereefian family had been invited to settle there, and when the need for a strong central control in Morocco was felt by the southern tribes, they asked these descendants of Muhammad to become their leaders. At the head of an ever-increasing number of followers, this family began recapturing areas subject to the Merinids and the coastal towns under Portuguese control.

The increasing strength of this Saadien dynasty brought about the famous 'Battle of the Three Kings'. In 1578 the Portuguese king Dom Sebastian landed at Tangier with the avowed purpose of crushing the new dynasty and establishing Christian control over the country. Opposing him was Abd al-Malik, a shrewd and powerful sultan who, although killed in the battle, brought about the death of Sebastian as well as of Malik's brother, a renegade, self-styled sultan, and the defeat of the heterogeneous Christian army.

With the complete rout of the European forces, reports of Morocco's newly established strength began to reach the courts of Europe. Ahmad al-Mansur, another brother and successor of the hero of the 'Battle of the Three Kings', soon proved himself to be the greatest of the Saadiens and one to whom ambassadors from all Europe paid their respects. He became strong enough to eliminate all foreign holdings in his country and to conquer the area south of Morocco to the western Sudan. It was during al-Mansur's reign that the country began to divide itself into areas accepting the central authority of the sultan and his government and known as *Bled el Makhzen*, and those that refused to support that authority were known

as *Bled es Siba*. This division persisted to some extent down to the year 1912 when the French occupied Morocco.

In spite of the authority which Ahmad al-Mansur exercised, he was unable to insure the power of the Saadien dynasty. Within less than fifty years after his death in 1603, a new dynasty was able to establish itself on the Moroccan throne.

At about the same time as the first Saadiens were invited to settle in the Sus (southern Morocco), another Shereefian family from the Near East, the Filalis (later to be known as the Alaouites), settled in the south in the Tefilalet. Within a short time they had won the respect of the Berber tribes, and they gradually succeeded in replacing the Saadiens. To the present day Morocco is ruled by a member of the Alaouite dynasty.

The best known of the early Alaouites was Moulay Ismail, a contemporary of Louis XIV, who ruled from 1672 to 1727. His proverbial cruelty was notorious in Europe thanks to the stories circulated by the few Christian slaves who managed to escape from Morocco or who were ransomed. The Sultan used thousands of captured artisans to construct what he wished to be a super-Versailles at his new capital in Meknes. Under his harsh but efficient rule, Morocco was once more united and enjoyed a well-organized and efficient administration. Taxes were levied on a businesslike basis, foreign trade was stimulated, and foreign embassies were established in the capital. It was just on the eve of Moulay Ismail's reign that the city of Tangier fell under the English Crown, forming a part of Catherine of Braganza's dowry on her marriage to England's Charles II. But England found herself unable to hold on to Tangier for more than twenty-three years, and in 1684 the city was reoccupied by Moroccan troops.

For thirty years after Moulay Ismail's death, Morocco was the epitome of confusion. So uncertain was the situation that one of his sons gained the throne and lost it no less than six times. A strong and just ruler did not emerge until the reign of Muhammad ibn-Abdallah who retained the throne from 1757 to 1790. It was Muhammad ibn-Abdallah who, in 1786, signed a treaty of friendship with the United States and who was thanked by George Washington personally for his various efforts on behalf of the newly formed republic across the Atlantic.

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Under the leadership of one of ibn-Abdallah's sons, Sulayman, Moorish piracy was abolished and foreign ships, especially those of the United States, were freed from molestation. Sulayman also confirmed his friendly sentiments towards the United States by giving it a palace in Tangier to be used as a legation, a building occupied to the present day by the United States representative in that city. The strongest occupant of the Moroccan throne in the nineteenth century was Moulay Hassan, a grandson of Sulayman and the grandfather of the present king, Muhammad V, who ruled from 1873 to 1894. To counteract the growing trend toward isolation from the rest of the world, Moulay Hassan bought the first printing press that Morocco had ever seen and encouraged the printing of both native and foreign language newspapers. Rightly fearing European encroachment, the sultan offered in vain to put his country under the protection of the United States government. His premonitions were correct concerning Europe; because from the time his son took over in 1894 until his grandson gained independence in 1956, European nations used Morocco, with mounting frequency, as a pawn in their own imperialist policies.

By the end of the nineteenth century the situation in Morocco was serious. Inefficiency was the keynote of an administration which was hamstrung by isolation, fear of foreign influence and injustice. Local democracy was preserved by the retention of the tribal *djmaas* or councils, but a primitive autocracy typified the central administration. In 1894 the 13-year-old Abd al-Aziz succeeded to the throne, finding himself in a chaotic situation. His intentions were of the best, but because of his partiality for Westernism, his people distrusted him and, for the most part, refused to support his government. Poor administration coupled with exorbitant indemnities imposed on Morocco by Spain and France, with tribal revolts induced and fanned by foreign governments, and with inevitably increased taxation created many excuses for the intervention of foreign powers.

Although several European countries would have liked to gain a foothold in Morocco, it was the French who succeeded. For the past half-century Moroccan history lost the independent character which had been its proudest possession since the eighth century and became inextricably bound to French politics and administration.

Ever since France had occupied Algeria in 1830 and had made it a complement of French economy, the French had a more than fatherly interest in the future of Morocco. To gain control of Moroccan economy for French profit, France embarked on a threefold strategy of conquest: financial, military and diplomatic. The recent history of Morocco since 1900 shows that the native interests and local administration were practically eliminated by French authority and control.

In order to gain economic control of Morocco, the French took advantage of the fact that many foreign powers including themselves had levied indemnities and had made loans that were almost impossible to repay. The French were more than willing to lend the Moroccan government large sums of money to pay these debts so that France could have a free hand in forcing payment in any way that she wished. To expedite this policy, the financial interests of France, represented by a strong lobby called the *Comité du Maroc*, continually applied pressure on the government to control Moroccan economy.

In 1907, near Casablanca, a French company tried to build a railroad through a local cemetery. The resulting riot, in which nine workers were killed, gave the French a long-awaited opportunity. After shelling Casablanca, the French forced the Moroccan government to pay an exorbitant indemnity. High taxes necessarily resulted which stimulated bitter revolts against the Makhzen and so furthered French designs.

Using the revolts as an excuse, in 1907 the French moved into Casablanca, Rabat and the surrounding territory—a 'temporary occupation' that lasted for nearly fifty years. As a reprisal for the murder of a French doctor by some bandits near Marrakesh, France occupied Oujda, a city on the Algerian-Moroccan border that was about as far as one could be from the scene of the crime and still be in the country. By 1911 the lobby decided that the time had come for the occupation of the capital, Fez, and so a calculated plan of propaganda was instituted according to which European nationals were unsafe in Fez and had to be protected. The government in Paris found itself forced to dispatch an army of thirty thousand men who, without firing a shot, took possession of Fez.

France's diplomatic campaign for the eventual occupation of

Morocco taxed the skill of her diplomats to the utmost. All of her would-be competitors—Great Britain, Spain, Italy and Germany—had to be mollified before the ultimate prize could be gained. For a long time it had been a cardinal rule of the British that no European power should occupy the African side of the Straits of Gibraltar. Then too, Germany and Italy had designs on Morocco's economic potential and her unequalled strategic position. Then there was Morocco's closest European neighbour, Spain, that in one way or another, ever since the days of Isabella, had hoped to gain control over the Maghreb. Spain's cultural and racial ties with Morocco reached back more than a thousand years and there might have been some justification for her Moroccan ambitions.

When Edward VII, with his distinctly pro-French sentiments, came to the throne, the moment was ripe for a rapprochement between England and France. In 1904 a treaty was signed between the two countries that established the Entente Cordiale. While France renounced her claims to Egypt, England, in exchange, left France a free hand in Morocco. To placate Spain, France signed a treaty with her in October of 1904, ostensibly guaranteeing the independence of Morocco, but in secret stipulations dividing Morocco between them. The mutual suspicions of the various powers with regard to Morocco came to a head in 1905 when the Kaiser paid a spectacular visit to Tangier to assure the sultan of Germany's support of his sovereignty. To avoid a possible conflict between Germany and France, an international conference met in 1906 in Algeciras, in southern Spain.

It was the first great international conference of the twentieth century, and the first of its nature in which the United States participated. Representatives of the twelve major powers of the world sat down together in conclave in order to agree upon the maintenance of Morocco's sovereignty and independence. But as events were to prove, the Act of Algeciras failed to do that. Instead, what it did was to delineate more clearly and to strengthen the various European alliances.

The true worth of the French signature on the Act of Algeciras was soon demonstrated by her 1907 occupation of Casablanca, Rabat and Oujda and the subsequent move into Fez. In the same year as Fez was taken, the German Kaiser, who had not been appeased by any special concessions, sent the gunboat *Panther* to Morocco's southern

port of Agadir to intimidate the French. Faced with such overt evidence of German displeasure, the French were forced to mollify Germany with an offer of some African territory. In 1911, in exchange for freedom of action in Morocco, the French gave Germany 107,000 square miles of the Cameroons.

By the end of 1911, France had accomplished her preparatory work for a 'legal' occupation of Morocco. By that time Moroccan finances were utterly disrupted, and the sultan's government was financially entirely dependent upon France. Militarily France was in control of, most of the strategically decisive points in Morocco; diplomatically, France was free to act in Morocco as she pleased. The authority of the Sultan Abd al-Aziz had been so undermined by France and by French inspired rebel leaders that he was forced to abdicate. His brother and successor, Moulay Hafid, found himself confronted by like difficulties created by like causes.

To give some aura of legitimacy to their occupation of Morocco, the French more or less forced the sultan to sign, on March 30, 1912, the Treaty of Fez by the terms of which Morocco's independence gave way to French 'protection'. Although, in the subsequent years, the French claimed that the people of Morocco welcomed them as liberators from oppression and poverty, the fact is that it took France another twenty years to occupy the whole of Morocco and to pacify it. If the French had abided loyally by the treaty which they themselves had imposed upon Morocco, France would probably still be in control.

The first French Resident-General in Morocco, General Lyautey, genuinely wished to help Morocco by modernizing the country's administration and economy and by respecting the rights of the natives. However, almost from the very beginning, the power of the Moroccan lobby in Paris proved stronger than that of Lyautey, and, under his successors, the protectorate regime gradually was replaced by one of pure colonialism. Indirect administration made room for one of direct French control, and native rights were more and more disregarded. This inevitably led to the birth of a nationalist movement and to a rising conflict between Morocco and France. That conflict reached its climax in 1953 when the French, hiding behind a number of native stooges, deposed the legitimate sultan,



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Mohammed V, who by that time had become the chief spokesman of his people. Before that event many Moroccans still believed in the 'good faith' of France and were hoping that France would see the warning on the wall and restore those rights to them that, in 1912, she had pledged herself to respect. Though France's achievements in Morocco were highly impressive and spectacular, though the country had been modernized and its wealth increased, most of the new benefits were a monopoly of the French settlers, merchants, bankers and industrialists; and the lot of the natives was, if anything, worse than it had been before 1912.

When, between 1953 and 1955, the entire population rose against France and the French-imposed puppet sultan, ben-Arafa, the government in Paris finally realized that the colonialist game was up. The legitimate sultan was brought back hastily from his exile in Madagascar, and soon afterwards France was compelled to grant Morocco full sovereignty and independence. It would, however, be wrong to blame France for the criminal errors committed in Morocco. The French people as a whole knew little of what was really happening in the Maghreb, most of their knowledge deriving from a propaganda campaign conducted, at enormous expense and without scruples, by the representatives of the lobby, their newspapers and their spokesmen inside the government and the French Assembly. Yet, finally, it was France that had to pay for the selfish policies of the lobbyists, losing in that process not only the friendship of ten million Moroccans, but also depriving these latter of much of the economic assistance upon which they were dependent.

It is too early to say how this conflict will be resolved or what other powers might step in to provide the financial and technical assistance that, at one time, had been France's exclusive monopoly. For as soon as France relinquished her protectorate rights in Morocco, she also withheld those loans that she had promised to offer the newly independent state. In spite of the fact that the Moroccan government solemnly guaranteed the rights (and salaries and pensions) of the French employees, whether in the administration or as teachers and technicians, the French Embassy at Rabat encouraged the departure of French nationals, thus adding to the difficulties of the new state. In spite of all these difficulties—aggravated by droughts and bad harvests—Morocco not only managed to survive but even made

spectacular advances in various fields. Thus, for example, within the first two years of independence, the number of native children at school was doubled; a modern trade union movement was built up; the range of public works was enlarged; a preliminary National Assembly was established. The government rested chiefly in the hands of the Istiqlal (Independence) Party that had contributed so greatly to the attainment of independence. But the true policy-maker and leader of the country proved himself King Mohammed V, whose record as an independence fighter had made him into the idol of his people, and whose political wisdom and moderation assured him the respect of foreign powers.

### II. ALGERIA

East of Morocco and stretching from the Mediterranean to the heart of the Sahara, Algeria covers an area some four times larger than the Maghreb. However, only the northern quarter, about 185,000 square miles, is suitable for a farming or an urban population. The remainder of the country is a trackless desert sparsely dotted with oases and French outposts. The section of Algeria in which all but a handful of people live is an area of low mountains separated by a few fertile but poorly watered valleys.

Historically, the arable land was devoted to the production of wheat and other food crops, but with the advent of the French vineyards have taken over much of the good land. This situation has forced the Algerians to import food from France to the economic disadvantage of the native population. In common with other Mediterranean countries, Algeria produces large quantities of olive oil from orchards that swarm up the hillsides.

The early history of Algeria is much the same as that of Morocco except that the latter country never was completely controlled by a foreign power until the twentieth century. The Romans had control of Algeria and considered it an important part of their empire. The period between Roman withdrawal and Arab occupation was marked by inter-tribal warfare punctuated by sporadic Vandal invasions from the Iberian Peninsula. Various Berber and Arab tribes controlled the destiny of the country from the seventh to the six-

teenth century when the Ottomans pushed aside the native dynasties and supplanted them with Turkish governors. From the seventeenth century until the French occupation in 1830, the Ottomans had control of Algeria in name only, since it was too far from Turkey to be directly dominated by the Porte.

The history of the Barbary pirates and of Stephen Decatur's exploits in North Africa does not need repetition in this account, but French actions in Algeria do need analysing. France used the piratical activities of the Algerians as an excuse to invade the country, and after the Dey swatted the French representative with a fly-whisk during a heated argument, the French forces occupied the country and set up their own administration. Algerian resistance to the French was characterized by the fight of Abd al-Kadar who fought the occupation until his capture and exile in 1848.

From that date to the present the French have considered Algeria as a part of France. In 1870 the country was divided into three departments that had representatives in the French Parliament, but few native Algerians were permitted to select any deputies. In the twentieth century the franchise was extended to the Algerians, but only if they became French citizens. Most of the people were unwilling or unable to do this since citizenship was bestowed only on those who were property owners, had an income of a certain figure, could speak French, and who would put themselves under French law. This latter provision was the main deterrent, for civil law and the Sharia (Islamic law) have many points of conflict, and Muslims were understandably reluctant to abandon their religious ties.

The overall effect of these French policies has been to impose upon Algeria a, more or less, colonialist regime. Steadily increasing numbers of French 'colons' moved into Algeria, and occupied farm land that once was native property. The natives were forced to move to the urban centres of the coast where they eke out a subsistence living as displaced persons.

The Algerian people, using the independence struggles of Morocco and Tunisia as examples, are now engaging in a fight for freedom against the French. After November 1, 1954, this independence movement reached the level of a major event in world affairs, and has claimed the attention of the United Nations. Even though France insisted that the matter was purely a domestic problem and thus out

of the jurisdiction of an international body, the bulk of the world realized that a struggle for freedom from colonial domination was of universal concern.

### III. TUNISIA

The early history of Tunisia followed much the same pattern as that of Algeria. Early records show us that the Phoenicians established an important colony on the Tunisian coast, and were followed by the Carthaginians, Romans and Vandals. Culturally, Tunisia can claim no mean distinction, for it was the country of St Augustine, St Cyprian, Tertullian, not to speak of Ibn Khaldun, the fourteenth-century father of modern historiography and sociology. The Byzantines, led by Belisarius, pushed the Vandals out but were in turn dispossessed by Uqbah ibn-Nafi, the Ummayyad, in the seventh century. The Fatimids, whose reign actually began in Tunisia and was later extended over Egypt, controlled the area for a time, but were supplanted by local dynasties and by a brief Norman occupation from Sicily. The Hafsids, the most important native dynasty, were replaced by the Ottomans before the end of the sixteenth century, but as usual the Turks were unable to keep more than a nominal control over their conquered land. Semi-independent pashas ruled the area until, in the eighteenth century, the Janissaries elected a bey and freed themselves from Turkish domination. As in Algeria, piracy was an important business that flourished until the United States and the major European powers stamped it out.

Though there were periods of good leadership and efficient administration, by and large the history of Tunisia during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is a record of weak government and internal dissension. Such a situation was made to order for France who, with the approval of England—gained in exchange for a free hand in Cyprus—invaded Tunisia on the pretext that internal disorder in that country was threatening the security of Algeria. The Bey of Tunis found himself compelled to accept a French protectorate in 1880, a condition which was further legalized by the treaties of Bardo in 1881 and of La Marsa in 1883.

The French violated their protectorate agreements by inflicting

direct administration on the Tunisians and treating them as a colony instead of as an independent country. The first major protest against the French administration came in 1904 when the Young Tunisian Party was established to force the French to live up to their obligations. This initial moderate move took on a new emphasis during World War I, when the idea of national self-determination became popular. The year 1919 brought about the organization of the Destour (Constitution) Party, which was followed a few years later by the Neo-Destour group founded by the Tunisian President-to-be Habib Bourguiba.

The Neo-Destour Party was proscribed by the French in 1938, and its leaders imprisoned or exiled. World War II brought with it a resurgence of national feeling, and the French compromised by giving the Tunisians some elements of self-government. In 1950 the Tunisians, led by a moderate nationalist, Muhammad Shinnik, asked for some important reforms, and threatened to appeal to the United Nations in order to get them. This action precipitated French reprisals that resulted in an outbreak of violence that did not end until France withdrew from the country. The armed revolt coupled with an economic boycott that created a desperate situation for France forced the French Premier, Pierre Mendes-France, in the summer of 1954, to promise self-government to the people of Tunisia. The independence of the country was still not complete because France retained control of foreign affairs, defence and the police system. Independence finally came at the beginning of 1956; but it was theoretical rather than factual, for economically France still controlled the country and large French armies remained on Tunisian soil. As a result Tunisia was kept in a state of perpetual inner tension, a friction that was aggravated by the proximity of the war of independence fought in nearby Algeria.

In the summer of 1957 the Tunisian government deposed the reigning bey and proclaimed Tunisia a republic, with Habib Bourguiba as the first president. Like Morocco, Tunisia regarded herself as belonging to the West, and was eager to establish closer relations with the Western powers. Whether, however, the pro-Western sentiments of the Moroccan and Tunisian leaders would persist, and these two countries would play their natural role of forming a bridge between the West and the Middle East, finally depended upon the

response of the Western Powers and their willingness to assist the two North African states in their difficult days of transition.

Events, at the beginning of 1958, clearly disclosed that Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria form one entity, and can hardly be viewed in separation. The war in Algeria imposed upon her two neighbours tasks that the new and, as yet, feeble states could hardly be expected to master. The more France and her Western allies insisted upon viewing Algeria as an exclusively 'French problem'—thus isolating that country from Morocco and Tunisia—the more all three of them were being driven to the conclusion that only unity among them, possibly in the form of some federation, could assure their survival. The persistent shortsightedness and intransigence of France's North African policies appeared, in Arab eyes, to enjoy the support of the U.S.A. and Great Britain. In consequence, the Maghreb was being increasingly forced to relinquish its historic role of an intermediary between West and East. Inevitably, its hopes were focused on the East. In their mounting difficulties and their despair over the West's reluctance to view the fate of the Maghreb in a non-colonialist spirit, the North African leaders could hardly be expected to perceive that the leading power of the East was not likely to use their plight for any other but purely selfish reasons.

Only the West could enable the countries of the Maghreb to fulfil the mission imposed upon them by their geographic position and their history. Unfortunately, it seemed that the West's purblindness or impotence prevented it from fulfilling its own mission.

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- Julien, Charles-André: *L'Afrique du Nord en Marche*. Paris, 1952.  
 Laudau, Rom: *Moroccan Drama*. San Francisco, 1956.  
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# THE MAGHREB (MOROCCO, ALGERIA, TUNISIA)

## CHRONOLOGY MAGHREB

DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	
		MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
Fifth century B.C.	Herodotus	Writes of Moroccan area.	
c. A.D. 10	Octavian	Makes Tingis (Tangier) an imperial city.	
A.D. 42	Claudius	Makes Mauretania Tingitana a part of Roman Empire.	
429-534	Vandals	Control North Africa from Atlantic to Tunisia.	Fifth century Roman Empire collapsing.
533-543	Belisarius	Conquers North Africa for Byzantium.	Sixth to ninth centuries Europe in the Dark Ages.
660	Uqbah ibn-Nafi	Penetrates North Africa to Atlantic for the Ummayyads; founds Qairawan.	
697-698	Arabs	Conquer Carthage; end of Byzantine power in North Africa.	
701	Musa ibn-Nusair	Occupies Tangier and begins invasion of Spain.	
760-909	Aghlabid Dynasty	Frees Ifriqiya (Tunisia) from Abbasid control.	
788-970	Idrisi Dynasty		

# ISLAM AND THE ARABS

DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	
		MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
788-791	Idris I	Umayyad shereef accepted by Berbers and Arabs as Moroccan ruler.	Charlemagne rules in Europe (771-814).
791-804	Idris II	Founds Fez.	
909-969	Fatimids	Introduce Shi'ite doctrine into Tunisia.	
970-1053		Morocco divides into petty warring sections.	Danes replace Anglo-Saxons as rulers of England; Capet kings rule France.
1053-1147	Almoravide Dynasty (Murabitis)		
1061-1102	Yusuf ibn-Tashfin	Founds military monasteries; reforms Islam; conquers Spain and North Africa; develops strong central government.	Normans invade England (1066); First Crusade begins (1095).
1147-1275	Almohade Dynasty (Muwahhids)		Last Crusade starts (1270).
1075-1128	Ibn-Tumart	Religious reformer develops democratic government.	
1149-1163	Abd al-Mumin	Founds dynasty of Almohades; conquers Morocco 1148; Spain, 1150; establishes hereditary monarchy.	Henry II (1154-1189). Thomas à Becket.
1184-1199	Yakub al-Mansur	Revitalizes orthodox Islam; builds empire.	Richard the Lion-Heart (1189-1199).



# THE MAGHREB (MOROCCO, ALGERIA, TUNISIA)

DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	
		MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
1196		Battle of Alarcos; al-Mansur dominates Spain.	
1212		Battle of Tolosa; Moorish power fades in Spain. Almohades' accomplishments: organized government; developed industry and agriculture; built Giralda at Seville and Kutubia at Marrakesh; encouraged Ibn-Rushd and Ibn-Tufail.	Magna Charta (1215). Henry III (1216-1272). Louis IX. France reaches height of medieval glory (1226-1270). Development of Venice, Pisa and Genoa under impact of Crusades.
1213-1524	Merinid Dynasty	Beni-Marin tribe conquer Morocco.	
1228-1534	Hafsid Dynasty	Rule Tunisia.	
1258-1286	Yakub II	Builds New Fez with madersas (schools); re-establishes orthodox Islam; codifies religious laws; develops typical Fassi culture.	
1415		Portuguese capture Ceuta and Mazagan.	Joan of Arc executed (1431).
1492		Muslims expelled from Spain.	Isabella and Ferdinand reunite Spain.
1518-1830		Ottomans control Algeria.	
1524-1668	Saadien Dynasty	Descendants of Muhammad in Morocco.	Martin Luther issues Theses (1517).

# ISLAM AND THE ARABS

DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	
		MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
1574		Ottomans take control of Tunisia.	
1578	Battle of Three Kings	Defeat of Dom Sebastian of Portugal in Morocco.	Elizabeth I (1558-1603).
1578-1603	Ahmad al-Mansur	Gains complete control of Morocco; conquers western Sudan; trades with England.	Cromwell's Commonwealth in England (1649-1660).
1668-	Filali Dynasty (Alaouites)	Descendants of Muhammad who rule Morocco to the present day.	Portugal cedes Tangier to England (1662).
1672-1727	Moulay Ismail	Unites country; organizes government.	Louis XIV of France (1661-1715).
1661-1684		Tangier held by the English.	
1714-1835	Karamanli Dynasty	Ahmed Bey founds dynasty in Algeria.	
1757-1790	Muhammad ibn-Abdallah	Signs treaty of friendship with U.S.A. (1786).	Seven Years' War (French and Indian War) (1755-1763).
1795-1822	Sulayman II	Abolishes Moroccan piracy.	French Revolution begins (1789); Battle of Waterloo (1815).
1830		French invade Algeria.	Louis Philippe rules France (1830-1848).
1873-1894	Moulay Hassan	Best nineteenth-century Moroccan sultan.	

# THE MAGHREB (MOROCCO, ALGERIA, TUNISIA)

DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	
		MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
1880		France occupies Tunisia.	
1894-1907	Abd al-Aziz	Inherits chaotic conditions in Morocco.	Conference at Algeiras on Moroccan question (1906).
1907-1911		French occupy Casablanca, Rabat and Fez.	
1912		Treaty of Fez makes Morocco a protectorate of France.	World War I begins (1914).
1927	Mohammed V (ben Yussuf)	Becomes sultan.	World War II begins (1939); U.S. troops invade North Africa (1942).
1953		Muhammad ben Yussuf deposed by French.	National uprising against French (1953-1955).
1954		Algerians begin war against France.	
1954		Tunisia gains independence.	
1955		Muhammad ben Yussuf returns to Moroccan throne.	
1956		Morocco and Tunisia regain independence.	
1956		Morocco and Tunisia enter U.N.	

## CHAPTER 7

### MUSLIM SPAIN

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**A**LTHOUGH Spain and Morocco were the states farthest west in the Arab empire, together they formed the main bridge across which Islamic civilization and culture percolated to Europe. In less than a hundred years after the Hegira, the Arab dominion extended across northern Africa to the shores of the Atlantic. North Africa was not only conquered, but was permanently occupied. By 709 Musa ibn-Nusair, the Umayyad governor of the newly acquired region, had succeeded in subjugating the Berbers of Morocco. He had also come to terms with the legendary Count Julian or Urban, the Byzantine governor of Ceuta, who was to aid him in the wildfire conquest of the Iberian Peninsula.

In Spain at that time the strongest ruler was the Visigothic King Roderick. Yet his position was vulnerable. He was an usurper of the Visigothic throne against the legitimate heir, Achila, whose supporters may well have welcomed an invading force. Roderick was a tyrant who held his people in harsh bondage. Misruled, oppressed and impoverished cities were the result of a feudal system that was one of the worst vices of the Middle Ages. The Jews, as a numerous but severely persecuted minority, were further evidence of a Visigothic rule marked by intolerance and a low level of culture. The Christian bishops, more often than not, sided with the nobles in maintaining their own favoured and corrupt positions.

Therefore Julian's counsel that Spain was as a ripe fruit ready for picking presented an enticing proposition to Musa. Yet there was no authority from Damascus to cross over to Spain. On the contrary, the Caliph al-Walid had warned Musa against risking his forces at sea. But with the need for keeping the Berbers employed, Musa sent over a small expeditionary force of Berbers and Arabs under Abu-Zura

Tarif. In 710 the expedition of five hundred landed at a place which ever since has been known as Tarifa.

The next year a much larger force of over seven thousand men, comprised mostly of Berbers, set out across the straits under Musa's military commander, Tariq ibn-Ziyad, a Berber freedman. The first contingent took the rocky 'mount of Tariq' (Jabal Tariq), or Gibraltar. With more Berber reinforcements, Tariq met and defeated King Roderick in battle at the mouth of the Barbate River not far from Cape Trafalgar. Roderick fled and was not heard from again.

Tariq was free, therefore, to march on Toledo and to begin the rapid conquest of the country. Musa, in fact, became jealous of the unprecedented successes of his general and crossed over to Spain with an army to secure his proper share of glory. At the meeting of commander and subordinate in 713 at the former Visigothic capital of Toledo, Musa publicly censured Tariq, without realizing that he himself would later undergo severe punishment and disgrace in Damascus for a similar charge of insubordination.

Resistance to the further conquest of Spain was only piecemeal, and it crumbled rapidly. Many of the towns capitulated readily at the promise of tolerance, and the Jews, who had been severely oppressed under the Visigoths, greeted the Muslims as their deliverers. The conquered cities of Cordova, Malaga, Granada, Seville and Toledo were placed under the administration of the Jewish inhabitants. They were granted full religious liberty and were only required to pay the tribute of one golden dinar *per capita*. The Christians at first did not adopt Arab customs, but kept their Romance language and enjoyed complete independence with their own churches, laws, courts, judges, bishops and counts.<sup>1</sup> Once again the Muslims showed their tolerance toward People of the Book.

Thus the conquest of Spain or al-Andalus, a name that derived from that of the Vandals, was effected in the relatively short span of seven years. A small and insignificant opposition to Islam remained only in the northern corner of the country. The crossing of the Pyrenees did not come until 718, under the leadership of Musa's third successor, al-Hurr ibn-Abd-al-Rahman al Thaqafi. The immediate cause was to obtain booty. By 725, raids had penetrated as far as

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Irving: *Falcon of Spain*, p. 16. Lahore: Orientalia, 1954.

Burgundy, but in 732 the Muslims were turned back in battle between Tours and Poitiers by the Frank, Charles Martel. The consequence of this battle has frequently been exaggerated. In reality the Arab expansion had already reached its natural utmost extension—thousands of miles away from the centre of the Arab empire. By themselves the Arabs were too few in number, and they had to depend upon the assistance of Berbers from North Africa.

A Berber revolt in Spain in 741 was put down by a large army composed mainly of Syrian Arabs. It was this Syrian element that provided conditions favourable for the appearance of an Umayyad prince who was destined to organize Spain under a separate dynasty. In 750, the Abbasids replaced the Umayyads in the Near East. They were determined to exterminate all surviving members of the Umayyah house, but one of them, the youthful Abd-al-Rahman ibn-Mu'awiyah, the grandson of Hisham, the tenth caliph of Damascus, managed to escape. His flight to safety is a dramatic story which, indeed, appears stranger than fiction. When the Abbasids appeared at his camp the handsome, agile youth fled with his brother to the river. They swam together to safety on the opposite bank, but his brother, accepting the promises of amnesty, returned only to be put instantly to death.

For the next five years Abd-al-Rahman wandered in disguise through Syria, Palestine and Egypt, constantly pursued by spies. Again he escaped death at the hands of the governor of North Africa, where he sought sanctuary. Finally, upon reaching Morocco, he was received by his maternal uncles, who were Berbers. So close to Spain, he easily succumbed to the temptation of establishing himself there. The time was propitious, for the Syrians from Damascus, who had been sent to put down the Berber revolt, were dissatisfied. Abd-al-Rahman, a descendant of the great Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiyah, possessing all the gifts for strong leadership, appealed to them, and before long he was given the chance to prove his worth.

In 755, he crossed over to what was to become his new homeland, and one town after another in the south fell to him. Within a few years after the capture of Cordova in 756 he was master of most of Muslim Spain, and he was able to set about establishing the Umayyad dynasty of the West that was to last for almost three centuries. A gesture against his authority on the part of the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad was made in the form of the appointment of a governor

who was to contest his rule. Abd-al-Rahman's sole reply was to return the governor's head embalmed in salt and camphor and wrapped in a black Abbasid campaign flag.

Before him there had been a rapid succession of twenty-three different Arab governors, but now he firmly established his authority by abolishing the Friday sermon delivered in the name of the Abbasid caliph, even though he did not assume the title himself. As 'amir' he also developed an army of more than forty thousand mercenary Berber troops; and when, in 778, Charlemagne advanced as far as Saragossa, his Frankish forces fled in the face of a strong consolidated army. Indeed Abd-al-Rahman proved himself a match for the greatest ruler in the West.

Along with the establishment of stable government in which both Christians and Jews were permitted to participate, came prosperity and material benefits. Cordova became the capital, and there Abd-al-Rahman built a bridge across the Guadalquivir, an aqueduct to supply fresh water, and a palace with gardens which he embellished by many exotic plants introduced from abroad. At his own expense he did much to beautify the city, but his crowning achievement was the founding of the Great Mosque.

His successor was a scholarly son, Hisham I (788-796), who was succeeded by al-Hakam I (796-822), less noted for virtue than the pious Hisham. Neither of these two acquired the renown of Abd-al-Rahman II (822-852), who carried on the tradition of his namesake by shaping Spain into one of the most progressive and civilized countries in the world. Cordova began to rival the beauty of Damascus and the wealth of Baghdad, and, needless to say, it was infinitely superior to any city of Europe. The court became a centre for scholars and artists from the East. A Persian musician, Ziryab, who was equally learned in science and the arts, gained world fame as the leading arbiter of good taste and fashion. He introduced new plants and foods as well as different modes of dress, convinced as he was that in a truly civilized existence there must be a proper balance between intellectual pursuits and gratification of the senses. Both spirit and matter must be thankfully acknowledged.

The high level of Muslim Spain's manifold cultural pursuits were so appealing to Christians that many of these became Arabized though not actually Islamized. In adopting the more civilized ways of the

Arabs, they created a whole social class called 'Mozarabs', which meant those who adopt the Arabic language and customs.

Actual converts to Islam were called 'Muwallads', but in Spanish history they were known as renegades. A reaction to the predominant trend of Arabization found expression in outbursts of voluntary martyrdom by fanatical Christians.

The first of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain to adopt the title of caliph was Abd-al-Rahman III (912-961). By declaring himself supreme religious head of the Muslims in Spain, he left no doubt as to the strength, dignity and worth of a caliphate independent of the East; and under him Moorish Spain prospered and flourished as it had never done before.

Al-Andalus was virtually transformed into a garden, for the Arabs introduced irrigation and agricultural methods imported from western Asia. In sharp contrast to present-day Spain, so much of whose land is barren, scarcely an acre, with the exception of forests, was uncultivated. Oranges, lemons, pomegranates, asparagus, cotton, rice and sugar-cane were some of the fruits and plants that were cultivated by the Moors.

While the rest of Europe was wallowing in filth and degradation, Spain possessed clean, orderly cities with paved and lighted streets. Cordova alone could boast of a population of half a million inhabitants, seven hundred mosques, three hundred public baths, seventy public libraries and numerous bookshops.<sup>1</sup>

Great industrial development went hand in hand with agricultural expansion. Thousands of weavers and tanners supported flourishing cotton, wool, silk and leather industries. Carpets and tapestries gained international renown, and so did Toledo swords, armour and delicate works of steel inlaid with gold and silver. Ceramics and glassware from Valencia competed with the finest wares of Persia and Syria.

The Caliph Abd-al-Rahman's long and spectacular reign, lasting for fifty years, was followed by that of his son al-Hakam II (961-976). A great scholar and patron of learning, al-Hakam had no equal as a bibliophile, for he sent his agents everywhere in search of manuscripts. His library contained more than four hundred thousand volumes, many of which he himself read and annotated. In addition

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Lane-Poole: *The Moors in Spain*, p. 135. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1886.



to commissioning literary works and establishing funds for scholars, he founded many public libraries and free schools. Under him the University of Cordova, which had been founded by his father and which preceded both the al-Azhar and the Nizamiyah, became a centre of learning for both Muslims and Christians from other parts of Europe and the East. While in Europe only a small minority of the population, made up mainly of the clergy, was literate, almost everyone in Moorish Spain could read and write and enjoyed the privileges of education.

The splendid civilization of Spain was maintained at a high level under Muhammad ibn-abi-Amir Al Mansur (the Victorious), the vizier who ruled from 976 to 1002 for the incompetent Hisham II. But with the absence of strong central control and the outbreak of civil war, the Umayyad dynasty finally disintegrated in 1031. The military strength of the country derived from alien elements—Berbers from North Africa and Slavs who at first were slaves of East European origin and, later, slaves from any part of Europe. For the next fifty years numerous petty states arose under kings and princes who were either of Berber, Slav or Andalusian origin. Even though this period of 'party kings' was one of political instability, the individual courts succeeded in maintaining material prosperity and a high level of cultural activity. The country was weakened enough, however, to permit invasion from the north by the Christians who, in 1085, with the aid of the Franks reconquered the important city of Toledo.

From the south still stronger forces arrived, but these were Berbers who came at the invitation of the Andalusians themselves to fight against the northern menace. Under the Almoravide dynasty (1090–1147), all of Muslim Spain, with the exception of Toledo and Saragossa, was annexed to Morocco. By 1150, another North African Berber dynasty, the Almohades, replaced the Almoravides, and Spain was again ruled from North Africa.

Philosophic studies reached their highest achievements in the twelfth century with such illustrious figures as ibn-Bajja (Averpace), ibn-Tufail, ibn-Rushd (Averroës), ibn-Maymun (Maimonides) and ibn-Arabi. In 1170, the Almohade capital was transferred from Morocco to Seville, and under abu-Yusuf Yakub al-Mansur (1184–1199) the magnificent Giralda minaret was built.

With the decline of the Almohade dynasty, Christian rule was

reasserting itself in Spain, and, by the middle of the thirteenth century, the Christian reconquest of Spain was nearly complete. In 1212, the Moors under the Caliph Muhammad al-Nasir (1199–1214) suffered a severe defeat at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. Cordova itself fell in 1236 and Seville in 1248.

One island of Arab influence—Granada under the Nasrid dynasty—survived from 1232 until 1492. Throughout two and a half centuries it carried on the great Muslim tradition in scholarship and art. Its outstanding monument is the Alhambra, one of the world's most exquisite architectural treasures. The name, meaning 'the red' in Arabic, is probably derived from the coloured stone of which it is built. Granada was both cultural and spiritual heir to Cordova, but it, too, was destined for extinction, in 1492, with the unification of Spain under their Catholic Majesties, Ferdinand and Isabella.

The Spanish under Muslim rule had enjoyed tolerant and liberal treatment, but they were now in no mood to adopt the same civilized policy. With a fanatical religious zeal, they broke solemn promises to respect the Muslim religion and property, and embarked on a campaign of burning Arabic books and destroying most of the works that proclaimed the superiority of Moorish culture. The queen's confessor, Cardinal Ximenez de Cisneros, inaugurated in 1499 a programme of forced conversion—baptism or exile. The inquisition was under way in earnest, and many Muslims and Jews were forced into exile. In 1556, Philip II compelled those Muslims who remained to give up their language, religion and institutions. A final decree in 1609 brought about total deportation. It is estimated that between the fall of Granada and the beginning of the seventeenth century over three million Muslims were exiled or executed.<sup>1</sup>

Moorish Spain at its height represented a magnificent spectacle of cultural and material achievement. Fostered and tended by Moorish care, the land of Spain blossomed and became fruitful. The architecture of the Moors left an indelible impression on the landscape in the Mosque of Cordova, the Alcazar and Giralda of Seville and the Alhambra of Granada. The influence appeared even in ordinary construction and, in more modern times, extended to California and the south-west of the United States. With a poignant memory of a

<sup>1</sup> Philip K. Hitti: *History of the Arabs*, p. 556. London: Macmillan, 6th ed., 1956.

## MUSLIM SPAIN

glorious era, many Moorish families exiled to Morocco still guard the keys to their houses in Cordova or Seville.

In the arts and crafts of pottery, steel and leather it is difficult even today to determine what is purely Spanish and what is Moroccan. While the basis of the modern Spanish language is Latin, the Moorish occupation added a vast number of words of Arabic origin. Many of these are recognized by the prefix *al*, such as *alcoba*, *alcalde* and *alacena*, and it is through Spain that the West acquired so many of its words of Arabic origin. Thus, whether it is in language or literature, art or architecture, craft or industry, science or philosophy, Spain as well as Europe at large are deeply indebted to the genius of the Moor.

Unfortunately though this occupation for more than five hundred years has had a negative influence as well as a positive. A reaction set in that was almost entirely destructive. The Moor was regarded as an outsider and intruder, and Spain became one of the most intolerant countries of Europe. The purely native Spanish development was retarded by several centuries during which the Spanish either thrived on Moorish achievement or concentrated on a sterile opposition to it. Along with the power of the army arose a militant and authoritarian Church that relied far too much on the sword and intolerance. So much of what was beneficial in the Muslim civilization was banished along with the Moors themselves.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Dozy, R.: *Spanish Islam*. London, 1913.

Lane-Poole, Stanley: *The Moors in Spain*. London, 1886.

CHRONOLOGY		IMPORTANT EVENTS	
MUSLIM SPAIN		MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS		
A.D. 710	Musa ibn-Nusair	Umayyad governor of North Africa who sends expeditionary force to Spain.	Sixth to ninth centuries Europe in the Dark Ages.
711	Tariq ibn-Ziyad	A Berber freedman and Musa's military commander who defeats last Visigothic king, Roderick, in the battle on the Guadalete (Rio Barbate).	
718 124	al-Hurr ibn Abd-al-Rahman al-Thaqafi	Muslims under Hurr reach Pyrenees. Most of Spain subjugated.	Failure of second great siege of Constantinople by the Arabs.
732	Charles Martel	Leader of the Franks who turns back Muslims in battle between Tours and Poitiers.	
756	Abd-al-Rahman I	Descendant of Umayyad Caliph Mu'awiyah who captures Cordova and establishes Umayyad Dynasty in Spain.	Charlemagne's invasion of Spain checked at Saragossa (778). Annihilation of his rear guard at Roncesvalles— <i>Song of Roland</i> .
788-796	Hisham I	Son and successor of Abdal-Rahman I; Malikite doctrine introduced in Spain.	Charlemagne (771-814).
796-822	al-Hakam	Succeeds Hisham I.	Muslims conquer Sicily (827-1091).

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DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	
		MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
822-852	Abd-al-Rahman II	Cordova begins to rival the beauty of Damascus and wealth of Baghdad.	
912-961	Abd-al-Rahman III	Adopts title of caliph; Moorish culture reaches height of development.	Saxon Dynasty in Germany begins (919-1024).
961-976	al-Hakam II	Great scholar, bibliophile and patron of learning.	Roman empire of the West revived by Otto the Great (962).
976-1002	Muhammad ibn-abi-Amir Al-Mansur	Vizier who rules for incompetent Hisham II; decline of Umayyad Dynasty of Spain.	Election of Hugh Capet (987).
1085		Christian reconquest begins with fall of Toledo.	Edward the Confessor (1042-1066).
1090-1147	Almoravide Dynasty	Most of Muslim Spain is annexed to Morocco.	First Crusade begins in 1096.
1150	Almohade Dynasty	Almoravide Dynasty in Spain replaced by Almohade.	Henry II (1154-1189).
1184-1199	Yakub al-Mansur	Giralda built. Battle of Alarcos, 1196.	
1212		Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.	
1212		Moorish power fades in Spain.	Magna Charta (1215).

DATES	DYNASTIES AND LEADERS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	
		MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
1232-1492	Nasrid Dynasty	Granada remains a brilliant island of Arab influence in Spain; the Alhambra.	Birth of Renaissance in Europe
1492	Ferdinand and Isabella	Muslims expelled; Spain reunited.	Columbus discovers America
1609	Philip III	Final and total deportation of Muslims from Spain.	James I (1603-1625).

## CHAPTER 8

### THE SHARIA

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#### I. ISLAMIC LAW

**B**EFORE investigating the development of Islamic law from the time of the Prophet to recent modifications, it might be well to look again at the condition of society prior to the introduction of Islam in Arabia. Law, as we think of it today from the purely secular standpoint, or law that is a religious obligation, as in Islam, had no counterpart in the tribal structure of the Arabian peninsula. The nomadic people of the area were organized into family or blood groups that owed a loose allegiance to an elected chief. Laws, if we can give them such a name, were little more than customs that sprang up through usage and common acceptance and which were enforced by public pressure or a leader's influence. The debt that Muslim law owes to pre-Islamic structures will be mentioned later; suffice it to say that the pagan law was divided between inter-tribal and intra-tribal regulations.<sup>1</sup> Since the former type became redundant when, under Islam, all believers came under one brotherhood, only customs that regulated the individual's life in society were retained.

The body of laws that developed with the introduction of order and regulation through the Koran had no counterpart in Western legal practice that grew from approved standards of conduct. At the outset, law in Islam was based directly on God's revelation to Muhammad, and thus needed no approval from the community. Because of its divine and consequently infallible nature, the Koran laid down laws that were inerrant and that demanded obedience, not merely as a social duty, as in the West, but as an act of faith in God.

The term *sharia* applies to the entire body of Islamic law as it developed since the time of the Prophet. It is in this sense that this

<sup>1</sup> Asaf A. A. Fyzee: *Outlines of Muhammadan Law*, p. 6. London: Oxford University Press, 1955.

chapter uses it, even though certain groups wish to limit the term to some five or six hundred legal references in the Koran or in Muhammad's statements as contained in the Hadith. *Sharia* means literally 'the road to the watering place'—the clear path made by God to be followed by the faithful. Since it was originally taken directly from the Koran, the *sharia* is not merely a set of laws that affect the Muslim on some specific occasions, but rather it is the keynote of his entire existence; his religious, political, social, domestic and private life is completely bound up and regulated by the precepts of the law. It would be difficult to over-emphasize the tremendous importance that the *sharia* plays in the Muslim's life, for it completely characterizes Islamic thought—in fact has been called the nucleus of Islam.<sup>1</sup>

The original function of the law was the assisting of mankind to make full use of their God-given liberty, but this role had been misinterpreted and distorted into something rigid and stifling. The fundamental rule of the *sharia* is freedom and liberty; its purpose is stated by the Prophet, 'Ease the way, do not make it rougher', and 'Allah lays upon each man only what he can fulfil'.<sup>2</sup> However, if left unlimited, this liberty develops into licence, and society descends into anarchy in its worst form. The boundary (*hadd*) which God placed on individual freedom makes up the formal statement of the law (*hukm*) that, embodied in the *sharia*, forms the blueprint of the Muslim's life. It is important to note here that while the *sharia* is absolute in its supremacy over the Muslim community, it applies to a very limited extent to non-Muslims regardless of where they live. Furthermore, a Muslim who lives in a country where Islam is not generally followed is regulated by only certain portions of the law. Thus we see that the legal system does not profess to be of world-wide scope, but rather it is restricted by location and religion.<sup>3</sup>

Since the law was laid down to implement and guarantee the freedom of man, it must needs deal with the individual's responsibility to society within the Muslim community—the *dar al Islam*. The protection of society is of primary importance, a concept that stems in part from pagan Arabia's preoccupation with tribal integrity and

<sup>1</sup> H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, editors: *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 525. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, editors: *The Legacy of Islam*, p. 289. London: Oxford University Press, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Gibb, *op. cit.*



unity. Islam's primary concern is society rather than the individual. Therefore, the bulk of the *sharia* concerns the social aspect of the law, and there is in it very little that might be called the rights of man. While a solitary individual living in seclusion might easily dispense with the restraints imposed by the law for society, law is inevitably of vital, in fact of supreme, importance. Since Christianity's main concern is the individual rather than society, individual salvation is its ultimate aim and of greater moment than obedience to the law. Not so in Islam.

The guardian of the law was the caliph, the 'successor' of the prophet Muhammad. Beginning with the first caliph, Abu Bakr, the purpose of the office was to enforce and administer laws—not to create legislation. Such titles as that applied to a Fatimid caliph, 'the shadow of God on earth', became common in Muslim usage and probably accounted for the misconception in the West that the caliph's position corresponded to that of a Christian Pope. All ideal systems are distorted in human practice, and the Caliphate is no exception. The Koran makes very clear that two gods make the universe chaotic, and it therefore follows that to have two representatives of God on earth would be equally disastrous. However, in reality we find that, on at least one occasion, there were as many as three caliphs attempting to represent God. Some caliphs usurped law-making functions and acted as spiritual dictators for the community.

The preaching of the Friday sermon was the only religious duty in the Western sense that the caliph performed. However, all of his duties were, to the Muslim mind, religious because the separation between spiritual and secular does not exist. Some of the caliph's jobs illustrate this singleness of purpose: to preserve religion in its original purity, to insure that the law was obeyed and penalties for disobedience inflicted, to defend the frontiers, to maintain the Friday prayers, and in general to maintain a society in which the community is able to perform its religious duties. Thus the function of the caliph is to enable society to fulfil itself spiritually through its day-to-day activities.

The first element that affected the development of Islamic law was a natural adaptation of pagan customs from the Bedouins and

the villagers of Arabia. The *muta*, or temporary marriage, was practised by these people, and was tolerated by the Prophet, although, at present, only one legal school in Islam permits it. Similarly, the dower was adopted into the marriage system from the pre-Islamic culture, where it was in effect a sale price. This idea of a purely commercial transaction was changed in practice to a type of bridal gift.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional commercial practices in Mecca that had regulated trade for centuries were adapted to Muslim life and included in the body of the expanding *sharia*. Similarly, agrarian customs that had been in force around Medina also were absorbed by early Islamic law.<sup>2</sup> Probably the most important single outside source of law was that of the Romans as followed in the Byzantine provinces conquered by the expanding Muslim society. Some examples of Roman law undoubtedly penetrated into pre-Islamic Arabia via early trade routes and left their impression on local custom. A principle common to both Muslim and Roman law is that the plaintiff must be the one to produce evidence and witnesses to substantiate his complaint. If he is unable to do so, the defendant can swear an oath of innocence, thus clearing himself.

Some laws incorporated in the *sharia* originated in Jewish ritualistic laws, others in Persian and Greek sources. In general, it can be stated that the Muslims, asserting as they did their lively sense of the practical, adopted the legal institutions that they found in conquered countries. It is only natural that when unsophisticated Arabs came into contact with highly developed civilizations, they should be impressed by the form and order that they encountered and attempt to assimilate these elements into their society. It might be said that the Prophet did not intend to establish a complete law; rather did he think of its function as a remedy for certain errors and a correction of injustices and immoral practices that he observed in other societies. Therefore the Muslims felt justified in using whatever legal structures they found in conquered areas as long as this involved no doctrinal violation.<sup>3</sup>

Thus far we have referred to the Koran as the basis for the *sharia*, but such was the case only during the life of the Prophet. It is in the second source of the *sharia*, the *sunna*, that we find the first introduction

<sup>1</sup> Fyzee, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 525.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 612.

of customary law. The *summa*, the life of Muhammad, as recorded in the Hadith, has been a major source of information for the details of the law only hinted at or entirely omitted in the Koran. It is on the Koran and the *summa* that Ibn Hanbal's legal school attempted to base decisions regarding law. In general they used that part of the *sharia* called *nass*, a binding ordinance explicit in the Koran or Hadith.

The remainder of the *sharia* grew up when learned and pious scholars introduced new laws that increased its usefulness. Though at first it seems strange that other than Koranic words or those of Muhammad were permitted to be used in the law, these sources themselves encouraged this development.

Abu Hanifa (700-767) and his followers were the first to organize this legal expansion of the *sharia*. The Hanifites have been characterized as the liberals of Muslim law because they relied least upon ideas from the Hadith and most on analogies, *qiyas*, that they gleaned from the Koran. Abu Hanifa has been given the credit for developing the practice of *qiyas*, but such is not the case. Actually Abu Hanifa used this method to expand the scope of the law because by this time spurious Hadith collections had already been concocted. Consequently, rather than take a chance that his decisions might be based on counterfeits, he depended little on Hadith, but made rulings that were formed by analogy.<sup>1</sup>

Malik ben Anas (713-795) developed the second of the four main legal schools (not to be confused with sects, as all four schools are equally orthodox). Since Malik lived in Medina, it was only natural that when formulating the *Muwatta*, his collection of laws, he relied greatly on the local tradition of Muhammad and the Companions. However, he did not slavishly limit himself to tradition but adapted it to fit into new situations by using customary law and individual reasoning.

Islam's third school of law is that of al-Shafi (767-820). It marks a compromise between traditionalism and independent thought. Al-Shafi placed limits on the unrestricted use of common sense, and he developed a more systematic organization of tradition. It is he who is given credit for founding the science of Muslim jurisprudence.

Ibn Hanbal (780-855) developed a legal philosophy that stands in vivid contrast to the first three. Where they used *qiyas* or *ijma*, a con-

<sup>1</sup> Fyze, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

sensus of opinion on a legal matter, Hanbal adhered to an almost fanatical submission to sanctified opinion called *nass*. Since he rejected nearly every form of human reasoning, he was forced to accept some shaky *hadith* as foundation for his legal building.<sup>1</sup> Hanbal, an ultra-conservative, was nevertheless a man of saintly character and sincerity who submitted to extreme persecution for his ideals.

It must not be thought that the four legal schools are the only such groups. Many other leaders gained adherents, but their schools have not survived in their original form. At the present time the four main schools have followers in all parts of the Muslim world: (1) the Hanifites are in central Asia, Syria, Turkey and northern India; (2) the followers of Malik are located primarily in Upper Egypt and North Africa; (3) the Shafi'ites make up the Muslim population of Lower Egypt, southern India, South-East Asia and the coastline of Arabia; (4) the fourth school, that of Hanbal the traditionalist, is followed by the puritanical Wahhabis of central Arabia.

During the life of the Prophet, whenever a legal ruling was needed, the faithful merely consulted a *nass* injunction in the Koran. If this failed, it was a fairly simple matter to seek out Muhammad and to ask his advice.

Following Muhammad's death, the Companions and their successors were forced to find some new method of deciding problems not covered by direct statements in the Koran or Hadith. It is not known who first adapted the following event to the expansion of the *sharia*, but he should rank high on the list of Muslim notables. A classic Hadith concerning the conversation between the Prophet and a newly appointed governor of the Yemen, Muadh ben Jubal, gave the growing Muslim community a legal basis for modifying the *sharia*. The Prophet asked the governor on what basis he would judge cases brought before him. To this query he replied, 'On the Book of God'. When asked what he would do if the Koran gave no specific ruling, the governor replied that he would decide according to the *summa* of God's Apostle. If this did not meet the need, then Muadh stated that he would exercise his own judgment (*ajtahidu ra'yi*) without the slightest hesitation. At this point Muhammad exclaimed, 'Praise be to God, who has caused the messenger of God's Messenger to please

<sup>1</sup> Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

the later'.<sup>1</sup> Although, as translated, this answer sounds somewhat stilted, the fact remains that this tradition is one of the most important because it has affected all parts of Muslim life.

The foregoing illustrates the basic meaning and application of *ijtihad*, which can be defined as 'exerting one's self to the utmost degree to attain an object'. Although this idea of using one's own common sense was at this time accepted uncritically, very soon the law schools began to rule as to *ijtihad*'s legality.

*Ray*, the use of individual opinion, began as a fully accredited method of reaching a legal decision, but each succeeding legal school from the Hanifites to the Hanbalites became more critical of its use. This criticism was especially evidenced when decisions were made to establish precedents rather than for immediate judgments. Those who championed the use of individual reasoning turned their critics to the traditions of the Prophet. One such Hadith has particular interest because it shows that not only was *ray* recognized by Muhammad, but even an incorrect opinion had some merit. Muhammad said that if a man exercised his own judgment and was wrong in his conclusion, he would still receive a reward for obedience; however, a correct decision merited twice the reward of an incorrect one.<sup>2</sup>

A form of *ijtihad* that carried more weight than *ray* was *ijma*, the 'consensus of opinion'. This technique differs from *ray* in the way a monologue differs from a conversation—the number of participants. Gradually *ijma* developed into the consensus of scholars of one locality or historical period; so it really became group *ijtihad*. To illustrate the use of *ijma*, we might suppose that the governor of Yemen had used his own judgment—*ray*—to set the speed limit for camels in his area. If other authorities with a similar problem came to the same decision, then the combined judgment was *ijma*.

The *ijma* of the Malikites had great authority because it was based on agreements reached in Medina, the city of the Prophet. Similarly, agreements in Kufah and Basrah early in Islamic history had great weight because the residents of these towns were, for the most part, veterans of the first battles of the expanding Muslim community. Thus we see that although theoretically the consensus of opinion of

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Asad: 'On the Principles of Islamic Law', reprinted from *Arafat*, 1948, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

any Muslim group was valid, practice dictated that the *ijma* of the Prophet's Companions was more authoritative.

That *ijma* was absolutely inerrant was established by the basic Hadith wherein Muhammad said 'My people will never agree in an error'.<sup>1</sup> This statement gave absolute sanction not only to additions to the law but some key changes as well. When we realize that, through means of *ijma*, practices that were expressly forbidden by the Koran or by Muhammad became almost normal orthodoxy, the power and danger of this mechanism are readily apparent. Thus the heterodox doctrine of the sinlessness and perfection of Muhammad was accepted because many leaders agreed upon it. In a similar manner the non-Koranic system of the Caliphate was developed and given legitimacy.

The final and most important innovation permitted by *ijma* was *qiyas* (analogy), or, to use the phrase of present-day Muslim lawyers, 'analogical deduction'. When the early judges were unable to find a basis for a decision in *nass*, they decided that the next best thing was to use a parallel incident found in the Koran or Hadith.<sup>2</sup> The agreement of the leaders of the Muslim community gave the use of analogy great authority; only the legal school of Ibn Hanbal rejected its use.

To see how *qiyas* operated in practice, let us look at the Koranic injunction prohibiting the use of wine. When judges were faced with the problem of other alcoholic drinks, they deduced that wine's intoxicating nature had caused it to be forbidden. Therefore all intoxicants, whether distilled or fermented, were held to be illegal.<sup>3</sup>

The advent of modern technical progress posed such problems as the following for the Muslim community. Suppose that at a village's new water tank one careless user continually left the tap running. If the Koran is silent on the matter of dribbling spigots, the village leaders will have to find some parallel from which to draw an analogy. In this case it may have been that at one time the Prophet reproached some farmer for thoughtlessly taking more of the irrigation supply than was needed. From this incident it could be deduced that wasting water was prohibited by Muhammad and thus a punishable offence.

<sup>1</sup> Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 614.

<sup>3</sup> Gustave E. von Grunebaum: *Medieval Islam*, p. 148. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.

The four combined principles of Muslim law, as so far investigated, provide us with the body of jurisprudence known as *fiqh*. In the words of a modern lawyer, 'Fiqh, or the science of Muslim law, may be defined as the knowledge of one's rights and obligations derived from the Koran or *sunna* or deduced therefrom, or about which the learned have agreed'.<sup>1</sup> Here we note that both *nass* (Koran and *sunna*) and *ijtihad* (deduction and agreement) form the present-day basis for the practice of law in the Muslim community.

The Hanifites elaborated somewhat on the four basic principles by adding what is called *istihsan*—'regarding what is better'. They felt that even *qiyas* could be set aside if practical considerations made it necessary. If this had been adopted throughout Islam, a complete renovation of the *sharia* could have resulted. Malik developed another system called *istislah*, which means 'regarding the general interest', or 'consideration of equity and welfare'. This practice was felt to be somewhat better than *istihsan* because through it the community's good was assured. However, since a great deal of opposition was generated by these modifying practices, the *sharia's* modernization has been materially hampered.

A problem facing modern Islam is that the decisions based on *ijtihad* have been accepted only if they have been made in the past. The doctrine of *taqlid*, which means following an authority without regard for proof or evidence, has led to blind worship of authorities. This made all re-interpretation impossible because *fiqh* was never subjected to objective criticism. Since the *sharia* is the foundation of all Muslim life, this meant a choking up of the main lifestream of Islamic civilization. Direct knowledge of the *sharia* should be every Muslim's business, but *taqlid* placed it outside the reach of the average man. Thus we see a tightening noose around the neck of progress in the Arab world.

It might be helpful to turn to the law's assessment of particular human actions. At the top of the list are things which are commanded. These are called *fard*, and include such injunctions as keeping the Ramadan or observing the correct number of prayers. Next in importance are actions which are approved (*mandoub*) by the law such as being clean on a fast day. In the middle of the scale are actions

<sup>1</sup> Fysee, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

about which the law is silent. It is a matter of indifference to the *sharia* whether or not a Muslim uses an aeroplane or a boat for transportation; thus it is *mubah*. What the law dislikes but does not forbid is *makruh*, and should be avoided. Certain kinds of fish are in this category and are better left alone. Such things as injustice, stealing or the use of wine are *haram*, and thus are strictly prohibited.

In the early days of Islam, law enforcement was the caliph's job, but judgment of disputes fell to the *cadi*, the religious judge. Since in theory all cases, whether civil or criminal, came under the *sharia*'s jurisdiction, only one kind of court was needed. There may have been a *cadi* for each of the four legal schools in larger towns, but their general function was the same. However, soon only questions that were felt to be closely connected with religion, such as family law or inheritance, were brought before the *cadi*.<sup>1</sup>

Originally, the *cadi* was able to form his own opinion on questions that were not covered in the Koran or by Hadith. However, the bonds of *taqlid* soon tied his hands and forced him to follow established rules irrespective of their original source. As the power of the caliph increased, the *cadi* was naturally influenced by the wishes of the man who had the power to appoint or discharge him. Finally, under the Abbasids, the bulk of his civil duties were taken over by rival courts set up by the caliph.

For secular infractions, the *muhtasib* (police official) was appointed, and the court of the *nazir-al-mazalim* (complaint court) was established. The *muhtasib* inspected markets, censored public morals, and kept order in the community—things that a modern police department would do. The complaint court handled offences that the *cadi*'s court or the police had not the means to suppress. These *mazalim* courts gained their greater power because of their close relationship with the executive arm of the government, and because it could delay an opinion. The *cadi* was forced by law to judge a case at once even if all the facts were not available. In addition, the court of the *cadi* was obliged to follow the letter of the law even if it meant inflicting extremely harsh penalties. Even one of the Prophet's Companions felt that the Koranic law was too severe. On one occasion he advised a woman accused of theft to deny her crime, so as to spare him the necessity of condemning her to the amputation of her

<sup>1</sup> Gibb, *op. cit.*, p. 201.



hand.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is evident that again practice and theory took diverging roads.

Because of its very complex nature, a discussion of law, whether Western or Islamic, must either occupy an entire book or be reviewed in broad and somewhat abstract terms. To bring this survey to a more concrete conclusion, we might now explore the application of the *sharia* to daily problems in modern life.

Since marriage customs in Islam have always been a source of confused interest in the West, a few of the practices that have become law will be discussed. The *mahr* or bride-price is a throwback to pagan times, when it was customary to buy a wife. This was greatly modified in intent, but the form remained. Only a portion of the *mahr* is paid at the time of the wedding, and it is supposed to be used by the father of the bride to fit her out. If the marriage is dissolved, the remainder must be paid to the bride's father—an effective deterrent to hasty divorce. Although the Koran states that a man may have four wives, it qualifies this with the requirement that he must treat them all with equal justice and equity. So while legalizing polygamy, in its innermost sense, the *sharia* makes it impossible. In actual practice the custom of multiple wives has nearly disappeared, due both to the expense involved and to public disfavour.

Divorce is comparatively easy for a male Muslim. It is only necessary for him to pronounce his intent on three separate occasions and the marriage yoke is lifted. It is still difficult for a woman to divorce her husband, but present-day practice makes it more feasible than in the past. The Prophet said that divorce is the most disagreeable of the things permitted by God to man; therefore all attempts should be made to avoid it.<sup>2</sup> Temporary marriages called *muta* were permitted by the *sharia*, but practice dictated that respectable people enter into such contracts for a term of no less than ninety-nine years.<sup>3</sup>

The Koran prohibits adultery and penalizes the guilty with one hundred strokes of a rod or confinement in a house until death. The latter penalty sounds especially harsh, but since conviction requires four witnesses it is not surprising that it is seldom inflicted.

<sup>1</sup> Grunebaum, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Hakim: *Islamic Ideology*, p. 162. Lahore: The Publishers Ltd., 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Tritton, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

When in the Western world women were considered chattels and it was seriously doubted that they possessed a soul, Islamic law already permitted them to own property. Widows received a share of the husband's estate, but daughters had to be content with half of a son's portion. In light of modern practice, it seems obvious that such inheritance laws would be unfair, but until comparatively recent times in the West it was only the sons who received legacies.

Islamic business and trade operations, too, are dominated by the moral character of the *sharia*. The payment of interest and all forms of usury are definitely illegal in Islam. However, postal savings have now been permitted, although many pious Muslims still refrain from accepting the interest. Any type of business transaction that involves an element of chance, and therefore could be considered speculation, is proscribed by law. Included in this category is the fruit of an orchard before it is ripe, a heap of grain that has not been measured, or a runaway slave who might not be recaptured. Again, as is so often the case, strict legal considerations are supplanted by custom, and transactions that contravene the letter of the law are permitted. Thus we find that contracting for a yet unmade object is allowed if fixed specifications are laid down and the buyer has the right to refuse payment if they are not met.

The religious aspect of the *sharia* might be illustrated by the fact that mortgage is permitted because it helps to relieve the condition of debtors—at least temporarily. Deposit on a desired object has overtones of morality in that this payment helps the seller to preserve his property. If one is guilty of fraud, one risks the double penalty of God's displeasure and man's punishment; a fact that again emphasizes that the law is both civil and religious.<sup>1</sup>

In the field of international law the *sharia* in recent years has been modified to fit into the community of nations. The original concept of *jihad* (commonly called 'holy war') as a religious approach to foreign affairs has become obsolete. No more is it generally accepted that the only relations between the world of Islam and its opposite, the *dar-al-harb* (abode of war), must be battle or, at best, an armed truce. In international politics, with few exceptions, the religious element has disappeared in favour of customary law. Thus it is

<sup>1</sup> Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 306, and Tritton, *op. cit.*, p. 139 f.

evident that not only in the field of civil and criminal law but also in world relationships, the application of the *sharia* has been altered to include customary law and precedent more in accord with the trend of modern times.

The need for legal reform has been felt by Muslims for centuries, and changes were slowly made. In the Ottoman Empire, during the early nineteenth century, successful attempts were made to modernize the *sharia*, and commercial and penal codes based on Western models were established. Egypt in the 1870's developed civil laws based on the Code Napoléon. From then on, modifications in the religious legal system have been made, leaving only personal matters under the jurisdiction of the *sharia* court.

Thus we see that revision of the *sharia* is not new but has been going on for centuries. Turkey was the first country to make a thorough change in the religious law, and in 1926 abolished it altogether—not merely a secularization of the *sharia*, but a root and branch change of the legal system. In the Arab countries, too, the *sharia* has been undergoing a revision. Egypt, the Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Morocco and Tunisia are all moving toward a modernization of the law. To reform the legal system, precedents from the four orthodox as well as the extinct legal schools are used whenever applicable. If the new legislation clashes with *ijma*, the reformers deny that there is any real evidence that consensus really existed.<sup>1</sup>

Courts of Appeal, which are not even mentioned in the *sharia*, are accepted because the majority of Muslims realize their great importance. Egypt has by-passed practices permitted by the *sharia* but repugnant to modern thought by not allowing cases involving these customs to come before the courts. It follows that anyone who acts contrary to modern legal thought, even though conforming to the letter of the law, may be denied access to the courts. There is developing consequently a method whereby the religious law, without being changed, can be circumvented.<sup>2</sup>

A precedent-setting action was the Ottoman Law of Family Rights instituted in 1917. This law was the basis for modifying divorce, marriage and inheritance practices long in need of change. Egypt

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Guillaume: *Islam*, p. 168. Penguin Books, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169 f.

has now taken the lead in establishing progressive social legislation that is rapidly bringing the law up to enlightened modern standards.

It is apparent that the old rigid system of the *sharia* is slowly adapting itself to change, and is being reformed or, if felt necessary, even eliminated. However, it must not be assumed that modern laws have been adopted throughout the Muslim world, for the forces of reaction are still strong and firmly entrenched. Nevertheless, the reforms that have occurred and the progress that has been made started a movement revitalizing the law and therefore Islam.

### RECOMMENDED READING

Khadduri, Majid, and Liebesny, H. J.: *Law in the Middle East*. Washington, D.C., 1956.  
Schacht, J.: *Origins of Mohammadan Jurisprudence*. London, 1955.

### GLOSSARY OF ISLAMIC LEGAL TERMS

Cadi	A judge who rules on matters of religious law.
Dar al-harb	'Abode of war.' Any country not controlled by Islamic law.
Dar al-Islam	'Abode of Islam.' Any country where the laws of Islam are established and which is under the leadership of a Muslim leader.
Fard	Things that Islamic law commands a Muslim to do.
Faqih	A master of fiqh; a lawyer of Muslim law.
Fiqh	'Knowledge.' The name given to Muslim jurisprudence.
Hadd	'Boundary, limit.' Commands and prohibitions found in the law.
Hadith	'Communication, narrative, tradition', pertaining to the life and sayings of Muhammad as recorded in written form.
Haram	Things which are absolutely forbidden by the law.
Hukm	'A restraining.' The formal statement of a law which binds a Muslim to obedience.
Ijma	'Agreeing upon.' A consensus of opinion concerning a legal matter that is not explicit in the Koran or Hadith.
Ijtihad	'Exertion.' The process of solving legal problems by going back to first principles rather than accepting the opinions of others.
Istihsan	'Regarding what is better.' The legal principle that permitted the setting aside of precedent when such action strengthens social equity.]
Istislah	'Regarding the general interest.' Similar to istihsan but more definitely limited by what is considered good for the community.

## THE SHARIA

Jihad	The war against unbelief. This could be actual warfare against unbelievers or could be religious activities to combat unbelief.
Makruh	Actions which the law dislikes but does not actually forbid.
Mandoub	Actions which are approved by the law.
Mubah	Actions about which the law is silent. No approval or disapproval is indicated.
Mufti	A scholar of Islamic law whose decisions were accepted; a religious judge.
Nass	A binding ordinance in the Koran or Hadith.
Qiyas	'Deduction by analogy.' Analogies from the Koran which were used to supplement the letter of the law in cases where no explicit decision could be found.
Ray	'Opinion.' The use of one's own opinion in a legal matter when there is no precedent established from the Koran, Hadith or <i>sharia</i> .
Sharia	'The road to the watering place.' Islamic law—the right road to follow to reach the goal set by the Koran.
Taqlid	'Clothing with authority.' The practice of following tradition without regard to proof or evidence.

## THE FOUR PRINCIPAL LEGAL SCHOOLS IN ISLAM

Hanifites	Founded by abu-Hanifa (700–767); relied greatly on analogy from the Koran to expand the <i>sharia</i> .
Malikites	Started by Malik ibn-Anas (713–795); fairly conservative and depended greatly on tradition to substantiate their legal rulings.
Shafiites	Founded by Muhammad ibn-Idris, 'al-Shafi' (767–820); limited the use of individual reasoning but were not over dependent on tradition.
Hanbalites	Founded by ibn-Hanbal (780–855); rejected the use of personal opinion and depended entirely on the Koran and Hadith; ultra-orthodox.

## CHAPTER 9

### PHILOSOPHY

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IT would hardly be wrong to say that Islam might easily have dispensed with philosophy. A religion as uncompromisingly monotheistic, as realistic and all-embracing as Islam, seemed to provide answers to most spiritual and secular questions and should have offered no excuses for philosophical speculation. It explained the mysteries of life in comparatively simple and concrete terms—far more concrete, in fact, than were those of Christianity, and infinitely less ambiguous than those of the great Asian creeds. Indeed, during the first century following upon the Prophet's death, the Muslims felt little need for rational explanations of Koranic tenets. Once, however, the early religious enthusiasm had abated and the Muslims were becoming more sophisticated, an intellectual interpretation of truths that hitherto had been accepted on faith became imperative. The position had, in fact, become very similar to that of the Christians who, ever since the days of Origen and St Augustine, had been attempting to produce an intellectual justification of *their* creed.

Within the world of Islam that need was felt even more strongly. Soon after the Arab empire had come into being, the Muslims were forced to defend their creed against vehement attack by Christians. Not unjustifiably, Christendom regarded Islam as its only dangerous competitor. Judaism had become the religion of insignificant minorities, and represented no threat. Paganism had been conquered, and the religions of Asia, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, were unknown in Europe. But the whole of North Africa had become Muslim; so had Spain and, for a shorter time, Sicily; the lands in which Judaism and Christianity had seen their birth were in Muslim hands; and Constantinople, the centre of eastern Christendom, was being threatened by the forces of Islam; forces which, on a number of occasions, battered at its very gates. The Christians felt it their duty

to combat not only the warriors of Islam but also the creed that had given them the original impetus to conquer so many lands which, at one time, had formed part of the Christian world. Methods both fair and foul were employed by them in their fight against Islam, its holy book and its Prophet.

Denominational self-defence was not the only motive that inspired the Muslims. Gradually they were discovering apparent contradictions in the Koran, contradictions that could be eliminated only by intellectual scrutiny. The killing by Muslims of Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, and Husayn, his grandson, raised before the community the well-nigh unanswerable questions: 'How can a Muslim kill a fellow-Muslim?' and 'What constitutes a true believer?' Faith by itself could provide no valid answer to these questions. However, no philosophy can be conjured up out of a vacuum. To develop a philosophical system specific intellectual tools and disciplines are required. Their own cultural past had been too primitive to provide the Arabs with either of these. Neither could Judaism nor Christianity offer them such tools, since both found themselves in a like predicament. The philosophies of South and East Asia were unknown to the Arabs; and even had they been acquainted with them, it is not likely that, with their passion for concreteness and for unambiguous truths, they would have made much use of them. One intellectual legacy only lay at hand, namely that of the Greeks. The Near East was still saturated with Greek wisdom, a wisdom of which Europe, sunk into the Dark Ages, had no notion.

The story of how Greek philosophy was discovered by the Muslims and then transmitted by them to the West provides one of the most fascinating chapters in the book of mankind's progress from ignorance to enlightenment.

Though there was no dearth of Greek manuscripts in Europe, most of these lay hidden and undisturbed under dust in monasteries. Roger Bacon tells us in his *Philosophiae* that the custodians of those manuscripts were too ignorant or too indifferent to study them, and Latin translations were still non-existent. Constantinople greatly surpassed Rome as a centre of intellectual activities, and it was chiefly through Constantinople and Persia that the Arabs acquired their knowledge of the Greeks.

After Alexander's conquest of the Near East, Greek knowledge found a ready welcome even in some of the most distant outposts of his far-flung empire. By the fifth century A.D., many of the Christian scholars domiciled in the Byzantine Empire were driven out by religious schisms. The most important of these were the Nestorians, regarded by the Eastern Church as heretics. However, Persia and Mesopotamia received them, and it was in the latter country that they founded their famous school of Edessa. Some of them were Greeks, others Syrians, but it was Syriac, a language derived from Aramaic, into which they translated the countless Greek manuscripts that they had brought with them.

By the time Mamun, son of Haroun al Rashid, became caliph in Baghdad (803), the Muslims were fully aware of the existence of the magnificent Greek patrimony, and it was their caliph who helped them to satisfy their new intellectual appetites. He dispatched agents to every country in which he suspected the existence of Greek manuscripts; he founded a special academy of translators, Dar al Hikma, at Baghdad; he gave employment to countless translators who put the Greek classics into Arabic. In all this work he employed Muslims, Christians and Jews alike. Study of the Greeks became a passion with the Arabs and their Persian fellow-Muslims. Gradually their translations and commentaries of the Greeks passed on from Baghdad to Sicily and to Spain where such Christian scholars as Michael Scott, Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, Gerard of Cremona and countless others studied them avidly. It was, in fact, a Muslim philosopher, Ibn Rushd, better known as Averroës, who interpreted Aristotle for the West, thus enabling Christian scholars, particularly St Thomas Aquinas, to lay foundations for a Christian philosophy and theology.

Of all the Greeks, it was Aristotle whom the Muslims venerated most as the fountain head of classical wisdom. Yet, in their purely philosophical pursuits as distinct from scientific ones, they referred not so much to Aristotle as to that mixture of Aristotle and Plato whose foremost exponents were Plotinus and his Neoplatonic school. The work that influenced them most was the *Theology* of Aristotle which, in actual fact, consisted of the last three books of Plotinus' *Enneads*.

The problems that preoccupied the Muslim philosophers were problems of unceasing concern to most Western thinkers: the



apparent contradiction between a perfect God and an imperfect world; between one indivisible God and a universe of multiplicity; between free will and predestination; between divine goodness and the evil existing in the world. Though the approach of the Muslim thinkers to these problems was intellectual and rationalistic, they never allowed the findings of the intellect to override religious beliefs. Their aim, in fact, was to produce a synthesis of the truths of religion and the truths of science. Though they may not have succeeded fully in that task, they came as close to producing a valid synthesis as did any philosophers of the West, and they left a deep imprint upon Christian scholasticism and Western philosophers in general. It is no exaggeration to say that Christian philosophy would not be what it is if it had had to dispense with the findings of a Farabi, an Ibn Sina, a Ghazali or an Ibn Rushd.

Before Islam brought forth great individual philosophers, it produced a number of intellectual movements which, though predominantly theological, provided, nevertheless, a sound foundation for the later work of the purely intellectual inquirers into truth. Seen from a distance of over a thousand years, some of these movements appear rather primitive to us. Thus the Murjites, the Qadarites, the Jabarites tried to resolve the fundamental Koranic dichotomy of free will and predestination. However, rather than attempt a genuine intellectual solution, they were content with theological sophistries and plays upon words. In the Mutazilla, originating with the eighth-century Wasil ben Ata, we are confronting, however, a serious intellectual movement that makes use of all the philosophical tools available at the time. In al Ashari (873-935), founder of the Asharite school, we find the seeds of many of the concepts utilized later by his more famous successors. While still concerned with the problem of free will, he also dealt with such fundamental concepts as those of existence and of the self. He might even be said to have anticipated Kant's doctrine of '*das Ding an sich*'. Likewise his followers, the Asharites, developed a theory of Atomism which anticipated in some respects the much later theory of monads evolved by Leibnitz. A movement whose repercussions were felt not only in philosophy but also in Arab politics and in Islamic science in general was that of the *Ikhwan as Safa* (Brethren of Purity), whose universalist endeavours entitle them to be regarded as the first 'encyclopedists'.

Though the Muslims produced a large number of philosophers of unquestioned merit, only about half a dozen of them attained truly international status: Kindi, Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Arabi. Whether willing followers of the Greeks, or opposed to them (as was Ghazali), they all drank deep at the springs of Neoplatonism. Even those among them who tried to refute Aristotelian premises were compelled to use the logic, and often the terms, that Aristotle's *Organon* put into their hands. Most of them also adopted the formula, devised by Plotinus, according to which it was not God who was directly responsible for the universe and all the problems resulting from its existence but an intermediary agent who was called the Logos or Nous, the Universal Spirit or the First Cause. But Plotinus' ingenious solution of that fundamental dilemma left many loopholes, many questions unanswered. It was the Muslim philosophers who perfected his system and who gave it an intellectually irreproachable appearance. Though in its origins their philosophy is unmistakably Greek, they turned it into a system that is unmistakably Islamic, and that is never completely divorced from the tenets of the Koran. Though neither politics nor problems of morality preoccupy the Muslim philosophers to any marked extent, whenever they do invite examination, it is within a distinctly Islamic framework.

The first of the great Muslim philosophers was Abu Yakub ibn Ishaq al Kindi (ninth century), usually known as the 'Arabian' philosopher because of his purely Arab origins. One of the early 'rationalists' in Islam, he was also a great admirer of Socrates, a Neo-Platonist and a Neo-Pythagorean. In common with most of the Muslim philosophers, he was also active in many other branches of knowledge; he wrote on medicine and astrology, and translated direct from the Greek. He regarded mathematics as the basis not only of scientific investigations but also of philosophical ones. His doctrine of creation differed little from that of Plotinus, from whom he accepted the notion of a First Cause (as the creative element) and that of a World Soul. In the fields of logic and of what we would term 'psychology', he proved himself an original thinker. Though his theory about the ways in which the spirit works in man derived partly from Alexander of Aphrodisias, the Aristotelean commentator who was active in Athens at the end of the second century A.D.,

his formulation was both more precise and more elegant than that of his Greek predecessor. Interested as he was in astrology, he naturally believed that the heavenly bodies exercised an influence upon human beings, but, because of his Islamic convictions, he denied those influences power over the human soul, and limited them solely to the minor role of motivators of purely physical occurrences.

Islamic philosophy can be said to have come into existence under the Abbasids, in the ninth century A.D. Yet within less than a hundred years it had already produced a thinker of truly international stature, namely al Farabi (870–950), a contemporary of Ashari. How strongly Farabi influenced Christian scholasticism we realize when we study the writings of St Thomas Aquinas, the outstanding Christian philosopher of all time. In his two fundamental works, *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologica*, St Thomas not only leans heavily on Farabi but (without direct acknowledgment) makes use of his most important concepts and arguments and, as often as not, quotes from him practically verbatim, especially from his *The Gems of Wisdom*, *The Intellect and the Intelligible* and *Political Regime*.<sup>1</sup> Yet three hundred years of political development separated the Muslim philosopher from his Western successor, and a great deal of philosophical material accumulated in the intervening centuries.

Farabi, whom the Muslims called 'The Second Teacher', that is, the very next one to Aristotle, the 'first' teacher, was the son of a Persian general of Turkish descent. In his many-sided education, mathematics played a decisive part. But in later life he wrote also on medicine, physics, psychology, theology and logic. An outstanding polyglot, he was reputed to be master of seventy languages.

It would be hard to decide in which of his various fields Farabi made his most distinguished contribution, whether in metaphysics, psychology or logic. His book *Political Regime* was recommended by Maimonides, the greatest Jewish philosopher, in the following words, 'I recommend you to read no works on logic other than those of the philosopher Abu Nasr Alfarabi'. Yet Maimonides was acquainted not only with the relevant books by Aristotle but also with those by most of the other Greek, Muslim and Christian philosophers

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Robert Hammond: *The Philosophy of Alfarabi and its Influence on Medieval Thought*. New York: the Hobson Book Press, 1947.

before the twelfth century. In logic, Farabi is best known for his doctrines of proof, norms and definitions and his law of contradiction. More clearly than anyone before him he explained how universal truths can be deduced only after individual truths have been ascertained and how abstract or conceptual knowledge must be preceded by 'percepts', that is, knowledge gained through sensory experience.

Hardly less distinguished were his theories on what constitutes 'true being', and what are 'essence' and 'form'. The orthodox Muslim conception of God's will as the force responsible for the creation of the universe he replaced by the more philosophical concept of the 'divine knowledge of the necessary'. Regarding knowledge as even more important than morality, he claimed that the basis of all rational knowledge must be mathematics rooted in astronomy. Such knowledge he viewed as the highest good attainable by man.

Like most Muslim philosophers Farabi dealt extensively with the subject of prophethood and prophecy, and, while many of his political ideas undoubtedly derive from Plato, he replaces the Platonic philosopher-king by the ruler who must also be a prophet.

There is hardly a single Muslim philosopher of later ages who is not indebted to Farabi. Many of the ideas and theories developed by his remote successors have their germinal being in his doctrines.

In spite of his decisive importance in the development of philosophical thinking, Farabi has remained far less famous in the Western world than Ibn Sina, known universally as Avicenna. It is not so much any one book or any one achievement of his that accounts for his great renown. It is rather the universality of his labours that has made him pre-eminent. Whatever subject he touched, were it science or medicine, philosophy or psychology, he illumined by the peculiar brilliance of his mind, by the liveliness and incisiveness of his intellectual grasp.

Abu Ali al Husain Ibn Abdallah Ibn Sina was born in Afshana in Persia in 980 and he died in 1037 at Hamadhan. Within the brief span of fifty-seven years he was able to produce an astounding number of works on dozens of different subjects, an achievement that can only be accounted for by his unequalled agility of mind and a power of assimilation of which history offers few such striking examples. The

son of a government official, he received an exceptionally liberal and comprehensive education, and was given the best teachers available. Yet it would appear that none of his mentors was a match for him. By the time he was 10 he had mastered the Koran and much of Islamic literature. By the time he was 14 he had mastered canon law, much of Aristotle, Euclid and Ptolemy, not to speak of innumerable Neoplatonic commentators. At 16 he had read most of the then available books on medicine, and was active already as a doctor. The next few years he devoted to enlarging his knowledge of logic, philosophy and metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> Through most of his life Ibn Sina wandered from princely court to princely court, occasionally employed as vizier, attracting throngs of eager students to his courses on medicine or philosophy, and all the while studying and producing book after book in an incessant flow. To mention but a few subjects on which he wrote: there were medicine and philosophy; mathematics and astronomy; problems of motion, vacuum, infinity, light, music, geology, chemistry and pharmaceuticals. Only in Leonardo da Vinci, of course in enjoyment of a more considerable legacy from earlier thinkers, do we find a similar universality of mind.

If any one statement could summarize Ibn Sina's philosophy, it might be said that it is not the fruit of a one-sided intellectual approach, but that it required the combination of both reason and intuition. While a great deal in his philosophy derives from Aristotle and Farabi, his notion that all reality is a flux or movement is entirely his own. That notion proves him to have foreseen intuitively some of the fundamental concepts of twentieth-century physics.

Although first and foremost a scientist and a philosopher, Ibn Sina never departed from the tenets of Islamic monotheism, and in his scheme of creation God is the apex and cause of everything. God alone is the Necessary Being in whom essence and existence are identical. Everything else is merely possible: it might or it might not exist, its existence being accidental. Likewise multiplicity and thus individuality can exist only in creatures other than God. Matter is the principle responsible for multiplicity and individuality, matter being the limitation of the operation of the spirit. Inevitably Ibn Sina

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Wickens, editor, *Avicenna: Scientist and Philosopher*. London: Luzac & Co., 1952.

refrained from trying to define matter, describing it as potentiality which, though eternal, has no 'being' *per se* or, at least, a tendency towards 'not-being', as opposite to pure Being inherent in God.

Ibn Sina devoted much time to problems of logic and to the operations of the mind in its process of acquiring knowledge. Though in his respective theories he drew upon the findings of Kindi and Farabi, his own conclusions show a greater clarity and perspicacity than those of his forebears. There is not much that modern psychology could add to his doctrine on the ways in which the mind works, a doctrine in which he tabulates the different faculties of mental perception. There is little in St Thomas' notions of human knowledge that we do not find already in the theories of Ibn Sina. Likewise Ibn Sina's highly intuitive recognition of the fact that the mind exists independently of the body (and thus that the soul is immortal) precedes by more than half a millennium the notion by Descartes that we are able to imagine that we have no body but cannot imagine that we do not exist.

Many of Ibn Sina's philosophical concepts were taken over by Western thinkers without, however, a due acknowledgment of their true source. His influence is even more noticeable in the doctrines of the Jewish philosophers, especially Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), many of whom in fact acted as a sort of bridge between the thinkers of Islam and Christian scholasticists.

The years following upon the death of Ibn Sina were very critical for the further development of Islam, either as a religious or as a philosophical system. The work of the philosophers was not always viewed in a favourable light by the representatives of orthodoxy, for it appeared to threaten the simplicity and directness of the faith. Even more dangerous for orthodoxy was Sufism, that is the mystical movement that developed within the fold of Islam. Sufism, which originally tried to formulate a system whereby a more intimate and personal relationship with the deity could be achieved, had been assuming extravagantly emotional forms. Many of its adherents claimed that a religious life did not depend upon adherence to the five cardinal precepts of Islam, implying thus that orthodoxy and religious authority could be disregarded, and that each individual was the sole arbiter of the nature of his relationship with God. Some

even went so far as to proclaim that they *were* God. Others felt entitled to disregard not merely religious laws but also the accepted moral code. Many of them became drink addicts or gave themselves up to morbid exhibitionist emotionalism and lecherous habits, all of which aberrations they tried to explain away as the legitimate concomitants to their religious life. Torn between these extravagant interpretations of the creed, on the one hand, and the rationalism of the philosophers on the other, orthodoxy was threatened with disintegration, and Islam, as a whole, with spiritual chaos.

It was at that critical moment that one of the most richly endowed thinkers of Islam, al Ghazali, appeared upon the scene to save the situation. Abu Hamid ibn Muhammad al Tusi al Ghazali was born in 1059 in Khorozan, in Persia. Though he lost his father while still very young, he received an excellent education. His outstanding intellectual gifts were soon recognized, and at the age of 33 he obtained one of the most coveted academic positions of the time, namely that of professor at the famous Nizamiyah University in Baghdad, founded by Nizam al Mulk, the great vizier of the Seljuq ruler Alp Arslan. A few years later he went through a serious crisis that was both mental and physical, and gave up his academic duties. He became a wandering ascetic; resumed, for a while, his teaching vocation; but finally withdrew into a life of solitary work and contemplation. He died at Tus in 1111.

As a result of the original crisis, Ghazali was transformed from a worldly teacher of philosophy and religion into a mystic. From his autobiography we learn that, after having made a profound study of the philosophers, the jurists and the theologians, Ghazali concluded that ultimate truth can be attained only through mystical revelation. His most important writings are an elaboration of that thesis. In this process of elaboration Ghazali succeeded in cleansing Sufism of its unhealthy accretions, and in liberating Islamic philosophy from some of its cold rationalism, not to say secularism. Those of his works which enabled him to achieve this task were principally the autobiographical *Deliverance from Error*, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences* and the more famous *Tahafut al falasifa* or *Incoherence of the Philosophers*. In this last book, while accepting the findings of mathematics, science and logic, and employing the weapons of Aristotelianism, he attempted to demolish the reputation of Aristotle (and

the Greeks) as the guides of Muslim philosophy. Unlike Farabi he denied that reason (and thus philosophy) can fathom the absolute and the infinite, and insisted that it should limit itself to the finite and relative. Absolute truth can be attained only through that inward experience that is the essence of genuine religion.

As would be expected, Ghazali's fundamental conceptions were diametrically opposed to those that his Muslim predecessors had so laboriously evolved out of Neoplatonic tenets. Thus, while they held that the universe was finite in extent but infinite (eternal) in duration, he tried to prove that an infinite time presupposed also an infinite space, since space is related to body, and time is related to the movements of bodies (i.e. those of the stars and planets). Having cast aside all the intermediate agents between God and His creation, such as the Logos, Nous or First Cause, Ghazali considered God as being directly responsible for everything that is. So while the other philosophers claimed that God dealt only with universals but not with particulars, Ghazali's God was concerned even with the minutest details of the world He had created. Ever since the days of the Muta-zilla it had become axiomatic that an acceptance of divine attributes (the classical ninety-nine Islamic 'names' of God) implied an acceptance of divine plurality. This, however, was inconsistent with His unity and the strict monotheism of the creed. Ghazali did not hesitate to accept God's attributes, which he regarded as coexistent with His unity.

Though philosophers like Farabi and Ibn Sina gave much thought to problems of the Caliphate, good government and political conduct, questions of morality *per se* preoccupied them much less. For Ghazali, on the other hand, such questions were of paramount importance, and in his *The Beginning of Guidance* he deals in great detail with every aspect of what he considers to be right moral and religious conduct. Nothing pertaining to such conduct escapes his attention, and he provides careful instructions for the solution of even such problems as jesting, self-justification, backbiting, arguing, cursing, over-eating and so on.

The most impressive attributes of Ghazali—apart from his more strictly philosophical attainments—are his great rectitude, his seriousness of purpose, and the almost tragic urgency behind his message. He embodies in his person and his doctrine a synthesis



between heartfelt religious piety and philosophical objectivity, a mystical ardour for God and an almost scientific precision in the manner in which he tries to give it expression. There can be no doubt that he deepened Islam's religious conceptions and 'spiritualized' orthodoxy. At the same time, he gave Sufism a respectability that it had lost long before his advent. His appeal was to the righteous but not the self-righteous, to the individualist but not to the libertine in the field of religion. His position in Islam is comparable to that of St Thomas Aquinas in Christianity. G. F. Moore is not the only Western scholar who maintains that Ghazali's 'personal contribution to theology was more considerable than that of the Christian theologian (i.e. St Thomas)'.<sup>1</sup>

As early as the twelfth century, Ghazali's books (not only on metaphysics and logic, but also on physics) were translated (chiefly in Toledo) into Latin and, from the very beginning, they exercised a profound influence upon Christian and Jewish scholasticism. While such Jewish thinkers as Maimonides and Bar Hebraeus were attracted by his ethical teachings, Christian philosophers avidly accepted Ghazali's doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* that did away with all the intermediaries between God and His creatures. It is more than likely that St Thomas took over Ghazali's concepts on the impotence of reason for explaining things divine; on God's unity as implied in His perfection; on the names of God; and on the possibility of beatific vision.

In our further survey of Islamic philosophy we must now turn away from the countries and the personalities of the Middle East and move westwards. For western Arabism, centred mainly in the Spanish cities of Cordova, Toledo and Seville, had become culturally even more important than Baghdad or any city in Persia. The intellectual vitality of Moorish Spain is comparable with that of Athens at its best, and surpasses that of Renaissance Florence. Even the members of new and comparatively unsophisticated dynasties, such as the Almohades in Morocco, became ardent patrons of learning and the arts. And the religious tolerance shown by the Muslim rulers of Spain permitted many Christian and Jewish scholars to give an added richness to the culture that was to become the glory of the Iberian Peninsula under its Moorish masters.

<sup>1</sup> G. F. Moore: *History of Religions*, Vol. 2, p. 457, 1919.

Though some Spanish scholars are wont to call the great Muslim philosophers of the West 'Spanish', in actual fact they were all Arab, their families having originally come from the Near East, a few others originating in Morocco. While the most famous of them was Ibn Rushd, known in the West as Averroës, there were several others who left their unmistakable mark on Christian philosophy.

Among the earliest 'Spanish' philosophers was Ibn Hazm, born in 994. Something of a pioneer in one of his chosen fields, he was the author of the first comprehensive study of comparative religion in any language, and was the first one to raise a number of important questions concerning the interpretation of the Old and New Testaments. His greatest fame in the Muslim world derived, however, from his *Ring of the Dove*, one of the earliest books expounding the theory of Platonic love. Some of the ideas contained in it are reflected in the poems of Spanish and French troubadours and in European romantic literature of the Middle Ages. Purely in terms of philosophy and mysticism his significance rests chiefly upon the influence he exercised upon Ibn Tumart, the Moroccan reformer and precursor of the Almohade dynasty, and upon his fellow-countryman Ibn Arabi, one of the most original thinkers not only in Islam but in the world at large.

Far more popular in the Christian world was Ibn Hazm's successor, Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Yahya, better known under the name of Ibn Bajja, and called, in the West, Avempace. Born towards the close of the eleventh century, he was one of the first thinkers in Islam to make a separation between the truths of religion and intellectual truth. Though some of his co-religionists compared his philosophical achievements with those of the great Farabi, in the Christian world he was better known as an astronomer, mathematician and alchemist.

One of the most distinguished and most attractive personalities among the 'Spanish' philosophers was Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185), who spent most of his life at the Almohade court in Morocco, acting there both as vizier and royal physician. He is best known for his uncommon 'novel' *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (*Alive, Son of the Awake*), which represented something utterly new in the contemporary philosophical literature. In the guise of a story of adventure, Ibn Tufayl describes in it, with deep spiritual insight, man's organic development from a practically

animal-like stage to an evolutionary stage at which perfect comprehension of, and perfect union with, God are possible. Incidentally, his book can also claim to be the model for the West's similar, though less spiritually conceived, story of Robinson Crusoe.

The most famous of the Western Arabs was Ibn Rushd, or Averroës, a thinker to whom we owe a greater debt of gratitude than most of us realize. Born in 1126 in Cordova, the son of a distinguished *cadi* (judge), he revealed at an early age his exceptional intellectual qualities. While still in his twenties, he had already won fame as a philosopher, scientist and jurist, and was invited by the Almohade ruler of Morocco to reform both the judiciary and the educational systems of that country. Soon afterwards the monarch requested him to clarify the cardinal points of Aristotle's philosophy; points, that is, which had never been properly elucidated up to that time. Accepting the royal invitation, Ibn Rushd set out to produce the three famous Commentaries on Aristotle that earned him the famous words in Dante's *Divine Comedy*: '*ch' l gran comento feo*'. For several centuries to come Europe studied Aristotle through the eyes of Ibn Rushd, and Averroism reigned supreme at the leading Western universities.

Ibn Rushd's influence on European thought was not limited to his Aristotelian commentaries. His own philosophical ideas left an even deeper mark upon Christian scholasticism. Opposing himself energetically to Ghazali's more theological theories, he countered the latter's attack upon the philosophers in his book *Tahafutu-l-Tahafut*, *The Destruction of the Destruction*. Like St Thomas, who borrowed many of his doctrines, Ibn Rushd defended the idea of the harmony of faith and reason. But, unlike some of his Muslim colleagues, he refused to attempt a fusion of the two. Religious truth and philosophical truth must be kept separate, the latter being the preserve of those who alone were capable of understanding it. His doctrine of the 'double truth' helped to liberate intellectual inquiry from its domination by theology, and thus to open doors to scientific investigation. As a doctor of great distinction, Ibn Rushd naturally was concerned with the purity of such investigations.

Though he tried to keep religion and philosophy separate, Ibn Rushd nevertheless did not depart from the fundamental tenets of Islam. Faithful to those tenets, he conceived the universe as an

eternal 'becoming', behind whose eternal movement stood the eternal Mover. But the creative essence of that Mover, or God, was, for him, not the divine will of the Koran but divine thought. Relying in his deductions more on reason than on acceptance of theological truths, he did not subscribe to Ghazali's sweeping theory that God is concerned both with universals and particulars. Instead, he postulated that, since divine essence transcends both of them, we cannot say whether it is concerned with the one or both.

Among Ibn Rushd's ideas that appealed most strongly to Christian thinkers were those concerned with the operations of human reason, and embodied in his theory of the active and passive intellects. The idea that earned him the enmity of the Catholic Church, and that made him suspect in the eyes of his fellow-Muslims, was that of the human soul. For he claimed that after death the individual soul loses its individuality, returning to the universal soul whence it had come. This theory was interpreted by both Christians and Muslims as a denial of the immortality of the human soul—a cardinal dogma in the religion of both. Yet this doctrine, later to be associated with theories of pan-psychism, became most acceptable to medieval scholars. Charges of heresy were also levelled at Ibn Rushd because of his views on the perfect logic underlying everything within the universe. Since everything within it was logically interconnected, no room was left for the miracle. Yet in Islam the Koran was regarded as a supreme divine miracle, and in Christianity the miracle was a central point of the entire creed. It was certainly not accidental that among Ibn Rushd's most enthusiastic followers were the Jewish philosophers, and that the writings of Maimonides are inconceivable without the Averroist model to which they owe some of their most significant ideas.

While the significance of the philosophers mentioned in the preceding pages has been recognized, however reluctantly, by Western scholars for a long time, it is only in the present century that Europe has begun to acknowledge the true worth of Ibn Arabi. This is probably due to the startling originality of Ibn Arabi's doctrine, to the complexity of his method and style, and to the paucity of relevant material in Western languages. An additional difficulty is posed by the distinctly mystical character of his philosophy. While the Sufism

of Ghazali keeps strictly within the framework of Islam, Ibn Arabi's roams over much wider fields and goes far more deeply into the very heart of the mystical experience.

Originally, Muslim mysticism was predominantly a Persian movement. It was the Persian Abu Yazid (Bayazid) of Bistam who first developed the doctrine of *fana* (the passing away of the self). Junayd of Baghdad stressed the idea of 'union' with the divine; and his pupil Hallaj (d. 922) made the famous but blasphemous statement '*ana l'haqq*' (I am the creative Truth, or God), and represented the supreme example of the 'intoxicated' Sufi who perceives the divine in every manifestation, himself included. From such tenth- and eleventh-century Sufis as Ibn al Khafif, Hujwiri and their far more important compatriot Abu Said, to the poets Rumi and Hafiz, the majority of the 'eastern' mystics were Persian.

Distinctive Sufi schools nevertheless developed both in Muslim Spain and in North Africa, especially in Morocco, which almost to the present day was a popular centre of mystical fraternities both spurious and genuine. Among the 'Spanish' Sufis the one who can claim to have been an original thinker and an innovator whose influence spread far beyond the confines of his own country was Abdallah ibn Masarra of Cordova, 883-931. Yet both his intrinsic importance and his renown are overshadowed by those of Ibnu 'l 'Arabi, the great sage from Murcia in south-eastern Spain. His life, which took him from Spain, via Morocco, to Mecca, Asia Minor and Syria, where he died in 1240, was devoted mainly to study, meditation and teaching. He claimed to have written some three hundred books on mysticism, theology, philosophy, biography and poetry. Though some of these were but brief, others are major works of many volumes.

Essentially a mystic who probes more deeply into the secrets of God and man than does any other Sufi, Ibn Arabi nevertheless succeeded in embodying his visions in a philosophical system as coherent and logical as that of the most precise philosopher. Though his style is often highly metaphorical and of great complexity, his doctrine has a unity and inevitability surpassing those of any of his Islamic colleagues. While none of the others really succeeded in explaining satisfactorily the apparent contradictions of good and evil, free will and predestination, the unity of God and the multiplicity within the universe, and so on, Ibn Arabi produced a doctrine of perfect non-

duality in which all these dichotomies are resolved. He can claim to be the only thinker in the Western, Semitic world who succeeded in doing this.<sup>1</sup>

Because Ibn Arabi's central idea is that 'there is nothing but God', he was often accused of being a pantheist. In actual fact his doctrine proves not the pantheistic postulate that everything is God, but the far different postulate that God *manifests* Himself in everything that exists. Thus his God, while in Himself pure and without attributes, reveals attributes as soon as He manifests Himself. The universe is thus a continuous manifestation of the divine existence. The universe is, however, not created, caused or willed by God—as it is for most of the other Muslim philosophers; it is simply the coming into manifestation of something already existing in God. A thing comes into existence not because of God's will but because of the specific nature of the laws within the thing itself. So Ibn Arabi's God is actually the name for all the laws inherent in existence.

Since everything that is is an aspect or manifestation of the divine essence, there is, for Ibn Arabi, no separation between man and God. Our sense of separation is only apparent, and due to our ignorance. Likewise, though God does not specifically desire evil, even evil (or rather what man considers evil) is a manifestation of certain laws that have their being in God. In order to be perfect, that is, complete, the universe must include what we regard as imperfections: otherwise it would be incomplete. Everything being a manifestation of God, man's free will, too, belongs to that category. In other words, whatever man does comes from God. This, however, does not imply that God is a capricious despot who wilfully imposes His decisions upon man. If man cannot escape from making a particular choice, this is due to the fact that he cannot escape the law inherent within himself. Such an interpretation by no means implies predestination. For man is never fully aware of the laws under whose command he acts, and thus must behave as though he actually had a free will. His fate is not pre-determined but *self-determined*.

Even when dealing with problems of such 'obvious' duality as cause and effect or active and passive, Ibn Arabi succeeds brilliantly in keeping within the framework of his doctrine of absolute unity. He

<sup>1</sup> Rom Landau: *The Philosophy of Ibn Arabi*. In *The Muslim World* (Hartford, Conn.), Vol. XLVII, Nos. 1 and 2, 1957.

shows how a cause cannot avoid being also an effect, just as an effect is also a cause. Thus distinctions between active and passive exist not in reality but only in our minds.

Specifically mystical questions take up much space in Ibn Arabi's enormous opus. His interpretations of the states of *fana* (passing away) and *baqa* (enduring) are far more precise and more profound than are those of other Sufis. In his very elaborate theories of the mystical states, he finally elaborates a theory of the Logos which differs greatly from the related theories of Philo and Plotinus. For he identifies the Logos with the Prophet Muhammad: not, however, Muhammad the man from Mecca, but the Spirit-Muhammad as the active principle of divine knowledge.

Though Ibn Arabi invariably attempts to remain loyal to the cardinal tenets of Islam, he succeeds in doing so only by giving them an esoteric interpretation that could hardly be acceptable to the orthodox. Not surprisingly, the orthodox viewed him with the gravest suspicion. Yet the originality and profundity of his mind were bound to attract thinkers from the very beginning. Thus, to mention but one example, we find unmistakable reflections of his theories in innumerable pages of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

In many instances Muslim philosophy anticipated a number of ideas and theories which, hundreds of years later, were 'discovered' and developed by thinkers in the West. Western scholasticism of the Middle Ages, as represented by Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Michael Scott, Ramon Lull, St Thomas Aquinas, derived some of its guiding concepts from the philosophers of Islam. Of course only the most outstanding among these have been mentioned in these pages. Yet even some of the lesser left their mark upon European thought.

With the thirteenth century and the invasions of the Arab empire by the Mongol hordes, the flowering of Arab culture reached its end. This does not imply that it ceased to exist entirely, but its originality and influence were from then on greatly diminished. Then came the victory of the Ottomans, and with it the creative spirit of the Arabs received what appeared to be its final death-blow. The Ottomans' antagonism to the introduction of new ideas, their intolerance towards their Arab subjects, the rigidity of their entire system, and the obscurantism that so often dominated it, shut the Arabs off from the

rest of the world and from the means of pursuing their own cultural life. For four hundred years they were forced to lead the existence of a colonized people kept in a political and spiritual quarantine.

It was not until the twentieth century that Islam was to produce another thinker of international significance in the person of Muhammad Iqbal, one of the spiritual creators of modern Pakistan. Iqbal, who drank deeply at the sources of Indian, Persian, Arab and Western (chiefly English and German) thought, must be considered the leading philosopher and one of the outstanding poets of contemporary Islam. In his main philosophical work, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, he attempts an interpretation of Muslim theology and metaphysics on the basis not merely of Islamic conceptions but also of those of such modern Western thinkers as Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Planck, Whitehead and Albert Einstein. Whether we agree or disagree with either his thesis or his conclusions, we must admit that his book represents the first attempt in modern Islam to rethink the entire metaphysics of that creed in a spirit of scientific objectivity. Yet Iqbal never sacrificed his allegiance to Islam nor his identification with the tenets of the Koran.

If we wished to summarize the significance of Islamic philosophy in a few words, we could say that, apart from transmitting, interpreting and developing the wisdom of the Greeks, it taught Christian thinkers how to reconcile philosophy and religion. But most important of all, Islamic philosophy shone as the sole intellectual beacon in the darkness of the early Middle Ages, thus, to change the metaphor, providing a bridge between the philosophy of the Greeks and post-Renaissance philosophy, symbolized by the names of Spinoza, Pascal, Descartes and Leibnitz.

#### RECOMMENDED READING

- O'Leary, de Lacy: *Arabic Thought and its Place in History*. London, 1922.  
de Boer, T. J.: *The History of Philosophy in Islam*. London, 1933.



# PHILOSOPHY

## MUSLIM WORLD

*Sects and Schools of Philosophy*

Murdistes

early eighth century

Suspended their judgment against sinning believers, and thus against the Umayyads. Outstanding representative: abu Hanifa, great jurist.

Qadarites

early eighth century

Believed in the power of free will (*qadar*—power); opposed to doctrine of predeterminism; first philosophical school in Islam; supported by several Umayyad caliphs.

Jabrites

early eighth century

Strict determinists who held that man has no power (free will) to escape from divine compulsion (*jabr*—compulsion).

Mutazilla

ninth century

Founded in the eighth century by Hassan of Basra and Wasil bin Ata, the Mutazilla represent the first truly philosophical movement in Islam. Attempted rational explanations of religious truths: the nature of God, His attributes, His creativeness. Greatly influenced Muslim philosophy. Under Mamun (812-833), Mutazilite doctrines dominated the official creed of Abbasid Empire.

*Sects and Schools of Philosophy*

Ikhwān al Safā

(Brethren of Sincerity)

tenth century

MUSLIM WORLD

Originally a secret religio-philosophical movement at Basrah with political aims; published a series of scientific books of encyclopedic nature. Aimed at synthesis of Shi'i Islam, Aristotle and Neoplatonism, and evolved a complex cosmology based on astrology and occult use of numbers. Influenced Ghazali.

EUROPE AND THE WEST

*Leading Philosophers (Middle East)*

al Kindi

ninth century

The first systematic Arab philosopher, Neoplatonist and Neo-Pythagorean. Stressed mathematics but wrote also on medicine, music, etc. Accepted Plotinus' theory of creation.

Greek philosophy, mainly Aristotle and Neoplatonism (Plotinus), rediscovered by Arabs in early ninth century and translated into Arabic, and then passed on to Europe.

Both his philosophical and scientific writings appeared in many Latin translations. Influenced Roger Bacon.

al Farabi

870-950

Regarded by Muslims as second only to Aristotle. Wrote on philosophy, mathematics, medicine and important works on theory of music. Made original contributions to metaphysics, logic and political theory. Left deep mark on most Muslim philosophers.

Influenced greatly Western scholasticism, especially St Thomas, and Jewish philosophers, especially Maimonides.

### Leading Philosophers (Middle East)

al Ashari  
873-935

### MUSLIM WORLD

Theologian rather than philosopher. Became founder of scholastic theology in Islam (*kalam*). Author of three hundred books; founder of important Asharite movement, propounders of Atomism.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna)  
980-1037

Most famous of Muslim thinkers and scientists, equally important in both capacities. Perfected Farabi's theories of Creation; made important contributions to logic and psychology. Introduced intuitive element into philosophy; anticipated Descartes.

al Ghazali  
1058-1111

One of Islam's most influential philosophers who, renouncing philosophy (and Aristotle), turned to mysticism, and reconciled Sufism and orthodoxy. Defined philosophically the roles of reason and of faith. Dealt with moral and ethical problems neglected by other Muslim philosophers.

### EUROPE AND THE WEST

Influenced Europe not directly, but through other Muslim philosophers, few of whom remained unaffected by Ashari.

Influenced Europe more than any other Muslim thinker, especially Albertus Magnus and St Thomas.

Strongly influenced Christian and Jewish scholasticism. His doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* was adopted by many Christian theologians.

### Leading Philosophers (Maghreb Spain and Morocco)

Ibn Hazm  
994-1064

Credited with four hundred volumes on philosophy, theology, history, poetry, etc. Famous for his *Dove's Necklace* anthology of poems in praise of Platonic love. Wrote first comprehensive work on comparative religion. Influenced Ibn Tournart, founder of Almohade dynasty.

His ideas of Platonic love reappear in Troubadour poems of Spain and France in European romantic literature.

## PHILOSOPHY

Ibn Bajjah (Avempace)

d. 1138

Philosopher, scientist, physician, astronomer, was considered an atheist. Separated religious truth from intellectual truth. Influenced Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rushd.

Ibn Tufayl

d. 1185

Doctor and Aristotelian philosopher at the Almohade court in Morocco. Best known for his philosophical novel *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, the model for *Robinson Crusoe*.

Ibn Rushd (Averroës)

1126–1198

The most influential of all Muslim philosophers, he was employed at the Almohade court in Morocco. Author of the three commentaries on Aristotle, important medical works and books on philosophy. Attacked Ghazali's 'anti-rationalism', defended the doctrine of the 'double' truth: religious and intellectual. Opposed to the idea of the survival of the individual soul and of miracles. Relied on reason rather than on theological truth.

Ibn Arabi

1165–1240

One of the most original thinkers in the Western world. Brought about a synthesis between mysticism and philosophy. A prolific writer, he produced the only non-dualistic philosophy of the West. Solved most of the problems that baffled his predecessors. Though mistrusted by the orthodox, has fascinated and influenced most Muslim mystics and thinkers.

Was translated into Hebrew and Latin. Influenced Albertus Magnus.

Became popular in Europe since the seventeenth century through numerous translations of his novel.

For hundreds of years Europe knew Aristotle only in Ibn Rushd's Commentaries. St Thomas took over many of Ibn Rushd's ideas. So did most Jewish and Christian scholastics, with whom he was more popular than with Muslims. Averroism was one of the main intellectual influences until the Renaissance.

Influenced such Christian thinkers as Brunetto Latini and Dante, who appears to have taken over many of Ibn Arabi's conceptions of heaven and hell. 'Rediscovered' in the West in recent years, he has begun to be studied by many Western scholars.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE SCIENCES

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#### I MATHEMATICS AND ASTRONOMY

**S**CIENCE is the most momentous contribution of Arab civilization to the modern world. The Greeks systematized, generalized and theorized, but investigation, accumulation of positive knowledge, minute methods of science and prolonged observation were alien to the Greek temperament. These were introduced to Europe by the Arabs. European science owes its existence to the Arabs.' Thus Briffault in his *Making of Humanity*. And George Sarton, in his monumental *Introduction to the History of Science*, has this to say: 'When the West was sufficiently mature to feel the need of deeper knowledge, when it finally wanted to renew its contacts with ancient thought, it turned its attention first of all, not to Greek sources, but to the Arabic ones.'

When we remember how primitive the Arabs were during their pre-Islamic past, the pace and profundity of their cultural achievements within a mere 200 years after the death of the Prophet become truly astounding. For we must also remember that it took Christianity the best part of 1,500 years to produce what might be termed a 'Christian' civilization. What, then, were the mainsprings of the Arabs' scientific achievements? They might be summarized as the ardent desire to gain a deeper understanding of the world as created by Allah; an acceptance of the physical universe as not inferior to the spiritual but co-valid with it; a strong realism that faithfully reflects the unsentimental nature of the Arab mind; and, finally, their insatiable curiosity. Everything that was in the universe was Allah's—from the mystic's ecstasy and a mother's love to the flight of an arrow, the plague that destroys an entire country, and the sting of a mosquito. Each one of these manifests the power of God, and, thus, each is worthy of study. In Islam religion and science did not go their

separate ways; in fact the former provided one of the main incentives for the latter.

As we know, the mother of all empirical science is mathematics, and mathematics does indeed play a decisive part in Arab science. Yet, as we shall learn, even in as 'abstract' a science as mathematics, religion it was that determined the nature and scope of the achievements of the Arabs. Originally the Arabs had, of course, no mathematics of their own and, as in philosophy, they had to rely chiefly on the corpus of discoveries inherited from the Greeks. But Greek mathematics were soon found to be inadequate for their purpose, and it was in Arab hands that mathematics underwent the transformation that enabled them eventually to become the basis of modern Western science. Without mathematics as developed by the Arabs, the findings of Copernicus and Kepler, Descartes and Leibnitz would have been considerably retarded. The Arab mathematical contribution might be summarized as: transmission and simplification of Greek arithmetic, rendering it a manageable tool for daily use by the introduction of the Arabic numerals and the decimal system; the invention of algebra, as that science is understood in modern times; the foundations of trigonometry, especially spherical. During the ninth and tenth centuries mathematics, a science which after a thousand years of existence was still only a vast jumble of well-nigh unrelated facts, took on form as well as substance, and the substance itself was enriched in both arithmetical and geometrical progression. Integration and formulation were achieved during these two hundred years of progress. The truly startling feature of this Arab achievement in mathematics is the close relation of its findings with the tenets and commands of religion. For purposes of religion it became vitally important for the Muslims to ascertain correctly the position of Mecca in relation to all the different parts of the world in which Muslims might be living; to determine precisely the moments of sunrise and of the rising of the moon by which the Muslim community could regulate the observance of the fast of Ramadan; and, finally, to measure surfaces correctly for the purpose of division of estates, since parcelling out of land jointly inherited had received divine sanction in the Koran. In order to perform all these diverse tasks, the Arabs had to develop mathematical methods which, while simple and practical, yet had to be precise. It is obvious that they could

not have achieved their aim had they relied upon the then existing cumbersome system of Roman numerals allied with the comparatively primitive geometry and algebra of the Greeks. In their spectacular advance in the field of mathematics, they found their own supple language a wonderful auxiliary, for Arabic, which is flexible, rich and precise, lends itself admirably to exactitude in terminology.

Modern scholars are not yet entirely agreed as to the origins of Arabic numerals. While it is probable that these numerals were invented in India, it is by no means impossible that the Arabs obtained them from some Neoplatonic sources. (See Cara de Vaux, *Legacy of Islam*, pp. 384-5.) Whatever the true origins of these numerals, it was the Arabs who made of them the basis of a simple, pliable and eminently practical system that could be accepted by the entire world. The chief Arab contribution is the practical employment of the zero. This the Arabs called *sifr*, empty, from which derives the Latin word *cifra*, meaning both cipher and zero. The Arabs had been making use of the zero and the decimal system for at least 250 years when, in the twelfth century, Christian Europe was persuaded that the 'empty' was not quite so foolish an invention as Western wisecracks had believed it to be.

The transformation of mathematics from their relatively primitive Greek stage to the far more advanced science of the Arabs provides us with a fascinating illustration of the ways in which the unshakable religious beliefs of a people can shape even such secular endeavours as those within the field of mathematics. For the difference between Greek and Arab mathematics is not merely a scientific one; it also denotes profound divergences in spiritual and ideological attitudes.

As we know, the ideal of the Greeks was beauty, especially, though not exclusively, beauty of a visual kind, whether of the human figure or of a piece of sculpture or architecture. Now such beauty must be based on the right proportions, that is to say, the right balance among the object's component parts. Only if such a balance exists can the individual parts combine harmoniously to produce beauty. This principle of perfect proportions dictated the form of the Greek drama as well as of Greek architecture and sculpture. Proportions, however, depend on some definite, immutable mathematical relationships between the individual components. Once that relationship is upset,

ultimate harmony eludes the creator, and the creation is not 'beautiful'. Change the relationship between the height, width and curvature of a Greek column and you destroy its individual perfection. The same applies, of course, to the perfect figure of a Venus or an Apollo chiselled by a sculptor. The Greek ideal of beauty is obviously based upon numerical relationships that are final and on numbers that represent immutable magnitudes.

The Muslim ideal was, it goes without saying, not visual beauty but God in His plenitude; that is, God with all His manifestations, the stars and the heavens, the earth and all nature. The Muslim ideal is thus the infinite. But in dealing with the infinite as conceived by the Muslims, we cannot limit ourselves to space alone, but must equally consider time. The Greeks did not view the universe in terms of the infinite, and their space and time had a static quality. But then the very aim of the Greeks was a beauty that implied a static unity, a unity the very nature of which abhorred dynamism. A Greek temple is clearly delineated and clearly definable in the luminous light of Greece. With its emphasis upon the earthbound horizontal axis, it shows none of the dynamism with which the spire of a Gothic cathedral thrusts heavenwards, losing itself, in that process, in the mists and clouds of more northerly climes. The Greek temple belongs most emphatically to the physical universe. Since its space is static, the element of movement and thus of time does not come into question. Indeed, for Zeno and Plato time was unreal, and for Heraclitus it was held within a circle. Altogether the Greek world is essentially static, equally intelligible to senses and reason, unambiguous. It is most definitely a 'being'.

For the Muslims the universe was a living and thus a changing manifestation of God's creativeness. It was not a 'being' but an eternal 'becoming'. Yet can we conceive a 'becoming' in terms of space alone? Time must needs be as important for it as is space. It was al Biruni (973-1048), the great Muslim mathematician, astronomer, physician and geographer who expressed the conviction of a living, 'becoming' universe in mathematical terms by giving numbers (his means being trigonometry) elements of function in addition to their basic usefulness as mere magnitudes; such elements of function obviously imply movement (or dynamism) and, by that token, time.

The first mathematical step from the Greek conception of a static



universe to the Islamic one of a dynamic universe was made before Biruni by al Khwarizmi (780-850), the founder of modern algebra. As has already been mentioned, matters of inheritance, division of estates, and so on, had more than worldly import since they were discussed in great detail in the revelations of the Koran. In an effort to enable the Muslims to follow the relevant injunctions with the utmost precision, Khwarizmi evolved his algebra, which was far in advance of the rather primitive algebra of the Greeks. In his algebra, he enhanced the purely arithmetical character of numbers as finite magnitudes by demonstrating their possibilities as elements of infinite manipulations and investigations of properties and relations. In Greek mathematics, numbers could expand only by the laborious processes of addition and multiplication. Khwarizmi's algebraic symbols-for-numbers contain within themselves the potentialities of the infinite. So we might say that the advance from arithmetic to algebra implies a step from 'being' to 'becoming', from the static Greek universe to the living, God-permeated universe of Islam. The importance of Khwarizmi's algebra was recognized, in the twelfth century, by the West, when Gerard of Cremona translated his theses into Latin. Until the sixteenth century this version was used in European universities as the principal mathematical textbook. But Khwarizmi's influence reached far beyond the universities. We find it reflected in the mathematical works of Leonardo Fibonacci of Pisa, Master Jacob of Florence, and even of Leonardo da Vinci. Most of the Muslim mathematicians were astronomers; astronomy forming, in fact, an inseparable part of their investigations. One of the leading Muslim astronomers (who, of course, was also a mathematician) was al Battani (Albategnius) of the late ninth century. We owe to him the notions of trigonometrical ratios as used to the present day; the substitution of the chord by the sine; the use of tangents and cotangents. He also advanced mathematico-astronomical science by correcting Khwarizmi's theories on lunar anomalies, eclipses, the inclination of the ecliptic, and many other accepted notions. His findings, in turn, were pushed a considerable step forward by Abu'l Wafa (d. 997) whose work in trigonometry not only anticipates Copernicus but, in certain respects, even goes beyond him.

It was another Muslim scholar who brought Khwarizmi's algebra almost to its present condition. This was Umar bin Ibrahim al

Khayyam (1038–1123), better known as Omar Khayyam, the great Persian poet whom the West has come to love (thanks to Fitzgerald's famous translation), as the author of the *Rubaiyat*. His book on algebra represents an enormous advance not only on the Greek achievement, but also on that of his Muslim predecessors. In using the method of analytical geometry, he anticipated Descartes in many ways, especially the latter's *Géométrie*. The Muslims also made important contributions to what might be called 'practical' astronomy, and in the field of astronomical instruments. In times as remote as the early ninth century, under Caliph Mamun, they measured a degree of the meridian by methods far superior to those employed by the Greeks, and they established an observatory in Baghdad. Even more famous was the observatory at Maragha in Asia Minor, founded in the thirteenth century. It was there that some of the most advanced astronomical instruments were being produced. To minimize error, the astronomers of Maragha made their instruments larger than any known up to that time. When Alfonso of Castile decided to construct an armillary sphere, he turned to the Arabs for assistance. The Muslims also published a number of astronomical tables found indispensable by Western astronomers. Al Farghani's astronomical *Compendium* remained in use in Europe for several centuries, and in 1573 was republished at Nuremberg by the great Melanchthon. Astronomy was popular not only among the Arabs of the Near East but also among those of the Maghreb (the West). It was in Spain that al Zarkali (Arzachel) invented an astrolabe, sufficiently famous to be the starting point for an entire astronomical literature. In his *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*, Copernicus quotes from al Zarkali.

Summing up, we can say that the distinguishing qualities of Arabian mathematics are the courage and open-mindedness of its practitioners. The weight of venerable authority, for example, that of Ptolemy, seldom intimidated them. They were always eager to put a theory to the test, and they never tired of experimentation. Though motivated and permeated by the spirit of their religion, they would not allow dogma as interpreted by the orthodox to stand in the way of their scientific research. Because their aims were not abstract but practical, they must needs seek simplification and lucidity. Yet, when all is said, the most significant aspect of their mathematical achievement is that it was an expression of their religious faith, for it was not

dogma itself which they resisted, but distortions of dogma which the intellectually timid sought to impose.

## II GEOGRAPHY AND CARTOGRAPHY

Geography might be said to be the sister of astronomy. So it will not surprise us to find that the Muslims' geographical investigations were motivated by incentives similar to those that enabled them to produce so many distinguished astronomers and mathematicians. Within less than a hundred years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims were living in a far-flung empire that stretched from India to Morocco and Spain. Each one of these Muslims was hoping to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his lifetime. Yet thousands of miles of unknown territory might lie between his home and Islam's holy city. The Pilgrimage might involve months, even years, of travel across deserts and mountains, plains and cities. It thus became essential for the Muslim community to gain knowledge of the territories that separated it from Mecca. At first that knowledge was provided chiefly by traders who, even in the early days of the Arab empire, penetrated as far as China and Russia, Zanzibar and the southern tip of Africa. As early as the ninth century, we find an Arabic description of China, a description in which the use of finger-prints instead of a signature is mentioned.

Gradually, Muslims acquired a taste for travel across the world for the sheer joy of acquiring new knowledge. With their passionate curiosity and their innate gift for observation, they were to prove excellent students, turning their attention to geography as well as to fauna and flora, to political and social institutions, to history and economics. The great respect in which the Arabs always held men of learning would often induce them to press on to distant lands in order to seek out scholars and, if possible to sit at their feet as students. Thus many of the travelogues left by Arab globe-trotters are, even incidentally, mines of useful information on the theologians, philosophers and scientists of the time. The most famous (and most entertaining) of these travellers was Ibn Battuta from Tangier (b. 1304), whose accounts include Ceylon, China, India,

Constantinople and many less well known parts of the globe. His 'travelogue' provides us with nothing less than a treasure-house of information on practically every aspect of the Islamic world in the fourteenth century.

A great deal of geographical as well as historical and scientific knowledge is contained in the thirty-volume *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems* by one of the leading Muslim historians, the tenth-century al Masudi. A more strictly geographical work is the dictionary *Mujam al buldan* by al Hamawi (1179-1229). This is a veritable encyclopedia that, in going far beyond the confines of geography, incorporates also a great deal of scientific lore.

For obvious reasons, cartography was quite as important for the Muslims as was geographical description. The outstanding figure in this field was Ibn Muhammad al Idrisi (1099-1166) from Ceuta, in northern Morocco, who worked in Palermo for King Roger II of Sicily. His main work, the *Book of Roger* (*Kitab Rujar*), while making use of geographical data collected by his predecessors, contains a great deal of entirely new information. This was based chiefly upon the reports of travellers dispatched for that purpose by King Roger to various countries. The chief value of Idrissi's book derives from its seventy maps which give a more accurate picture of the world than shown in any other contemporary maps. Among their remarkable features are their author's acceptance of a spherical world rather than the flat one commonly held to be man's earthly dwelling, and the placing of the sources of the Nile, regarded by many to the present day to be a Western discovery of the nineteenth century.

An important yet often neglected geographical idea of the Muslims was that there existed a 'world summit' at the very centre of the known hemisphere. This became known as the 'cupola of Arin'. The doctrine of a 'world summit' gained many adherents in Europe, among whom were Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus. In 1410 it appeared in Cardinal Peter of Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, from which, later, Christopher Columbus learned of it. In fact it made him believe that the earth was pear-shaped, and that the Western hemisphere should have its own 'summit of Arin'. Thus it is hardly an exaggeration to say that to Islamic geographers may be attributed some of the credit for the discovery of America. Even Vasco da Gama's sea journey to India cannot be dissociated from some participation by Muslims. After

## THE SCIENCES

Vasco da Gama had reached the east coast of Africa, it was his Arab pilot, Ahmad ibn Majid, who showed him the way to India and who took him there. This same pilot was also the author of a sailing manual for the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the waters of South-East Asia. Some Arabs even regarded him as the inventor of the compass.

Books on geography, whether astronomical, topographical, historical or descriptive, were very popular in Muslim countries. Most of these books were in advance of anything comparable produced in Europe. In fact Europe's knowledge of various parts of the globe was, for several centuries, based upon the findings of Muslim scholars. Thus, almost until modern times, the chief authority on Africa was Leo Africanus, the Moroccan Hassan al Wazzazi, whose account of his travels in Africa written at the end of the sixteenth century was, for two hundred years, periodically republished in various European languages.

## III MEDICINE

As in mathematics, so in medicine; the Muslim advance beyond the Greeks has far deeper implications than those of a purely scientific character. Through their medical investigations they not merely widened the horizons of medicine, but enlarged humanistic concepts generally. And once again they brought this about because of their overriding spiritual convictions. While their medical researches were of a strictly scientific nature, the spirit that moved them was rooted in their faith as Muslims. Thus it can hardly have been accidental that these researches should have led them to vistas that were inevitably beyond the reach of their Greek masters. If it must be regarded as symbolic that the most spectacular achievement of the mid-twentieth century is atomic fission and the nuclear bomb, likewise it would not seem fortuitous that the early Muslims' medical endeavours should have led to a discovery that was quite as revolutionary though possibly more beneficent.

In the comparatively static world of the Greeks, man was regarded as a more or less self-contained entity. If he happened to fall ill, it was his own self that was primarily responsible, he being the source

and progenitor of his ailment. Surprisingly enough, we find a somewhat similar conception in one of the most popular doctrines of our own century, namely in Freudian psychology, which seeks the answer to man's ills within his own self, his dreams, his subconscious and, finally, his sex. In fact all his urges, tastes and beliefs are said to originate in the sex-dominated stratum of his subconscious. Yet sex *qua* sex might be regarded as the lowest of man's denominators. In focusing his glance on sex, he focuses it on what is most animal-like, most egocentric in him. So intense a preoccupation with one's own self obviously weakens a man's interest in others. It may even drive him into an egocentrism that is barely distinguishable from divorce from the rest of mankind, indeed from a sense of utter isolation.

Any doctrine or therapy that, in any way whatever, might imply man's isolation from his fellow-men and the world at large would obviously be alien to Muslims. The Islamic universe, including mankind and nature, being but the living cloak of God, can admit of no existence in isolation for any of its component parts. A philosophy of self-centredness, under whatever disguise, would be both incomprehensible and reprehensible to the Muslim mind. That mind was incapable of viewing man, whether in health or in sickness, as isolated from God, from his fellow-men and from the world round him.

It was probably inevitable that, viewing man and his position in the world in the way they did, the Muslims should have discovered that disease need not be born within the patient himself but may reach him from outside; in other words, that they should have been the first to establish clearly the existence of contagion.

Muslim doctors had many opportunities for clinical observation of such dreaded diseases as smallpox, cholera and bubonic plague. However, such diseases were equally common in non-Muslim countries. Yet the existence and nature of contagion were recognized first by Muslim doctors. This can hardly be regarded as accidental. For their fundamental religious and philosophical conception made the Muslims view man as the link in a chain whose other links might be his fellow-man, an infected garment, air or water. None of these existed in a vacuum by itself; together they formed a brotherhood that reflected the unity of Allah. Obviously a man aware of being a link in a chain is not identical with one who believes that he can find all the secrets of his nature and its stirrings within himself. While

the latter will be drifting in isolation as a self-propelled islet, the former will never feel alone, never suffer from the frustration that the sense of aloneness so easily produces.

In a civilization whose central postulate is man's nearness to, and dependence on God, the doctor is not likely to rely on purely physical therapy only. The spiritual approach will be for him quite as important. Indeed the Muslim doctors seldom neglected the religious factor, even that approach which, in modern parlance, is called faith-healing: not, however, as an exclusive method (as common in Christian Science) but in conjunction with physical therapy. It is not surprising that in the hands of the ignorant and the quacks this often turned into mere superstition and 'magic'. This, however, did not invalidate either the wisdom or the efficacy of their method in which they tried to combine both spiritual and physical truths.

Traditionally it is the ninth century Hunayn ibn Ishaq who is spoken of as the father of Arabian medicine. It was he who headed the famous school of translators founded by the Caliph Mamun at Baghdad and who is the greatest Arab translator of the Greek classics. He is credited with having translated the entire medical opus of Galen, and it is due to him that Galen enjoyed such great renown among the medieval scientists of both East and West. Together with his pupils, Hunayn also translated most of the works of the other great Greek doctor Hippocrates. He was likewise responsible for the Arab version of the important *Materia Medica* by Dioscorides. These translations alone indicate Hunayn's lively interest in medicine, but the interest is confirmed by the large number of his own writings on medical subjects, the most famous of which are his *Questions on Medicine* and *Treatises on the Eye*, considered to be the first systematic textbook on ophthalmology.

Following in Hunayn's footsteps, most of the Arab translators of Greek medical works were also practising doctors who made original contributions to medical science. The outstanding figure among them was al Razi, called by the West, Rhazes (865-925). Writers on history of medicine regard him as one of the greatest doctors of all times. Extremely prolific, Razi bequeathed to his successors a large number of books, from short ones of a purely topical or transient interest to voluminous ones whose importance was not dimmed for

the better part of a thousand years. His famous treatise *On Smallpox and Measles* gives the first clinical account of these diseases, and even in the light of modern knowledge proves astoundingly accurate. With his *Comprehensive Book (al Hawi)*, Razi produced what must be the largest and most all-embracing work on medicine by any single writer. In its more than twenty volumes he gives a complete account of the entire Greek, Syriac and Arabic medical knowledge of his time. Moreover, the treatment of each disease is given in accordance with views of Greek, Syriac, Arab, Persian and Indian experts, to be followed by the author's own findings, based, as they were, on his own clinical experience.

Razi's medical encyclopedia was the first but by no means the last work of that nature. The universalist character of Muslim culture in general and the universalist tendencies and interests of Muslim scholars in particular made it inevitable that they should be avid writers and readers of encyclopedic works. Though a scholar might be better qualified in one field than in others, his interest was seldom limited to one branch of knowledge. The most famous exponent of Muslim universalism and the most famous figure in Islamic learning was Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna (980-1037). For a thousand years he has retained his original renown as one of the greatest philosophers and medical scholars in history. He was only 18 when his record and reputation as a successful doctor caused him to be summoned to one of the Persian courts to treat its ruling prince. It was he who, by recognizing that disease can be transmitted by water or by soil and that phthisis can be passed on from one person to another, opened the doors to an entirely new conception in human understanding. His fame as a writer on medicine rests chiefly upon the many volumes of his *Canon of Medicine (al qanun fit Tibb)*, a medical encyclopedia of almost a million words. In that work he describes every then known disease and its cure, and deals extensively with details of pharmacopoeia, in which he always took the keenest interest. Ibn Sina's *Canon* represents the culmination of the Muslim genius for ordering and systematizing. Some scholars, in fact, criticize it for a too detailed, almost artificial, systematization. Nevertheless, the book enjoyed an enormous popularity throughout the Western world, and for many centuries continued to be re-issued in numerous translations.



Ibn Sina symbolizes the victory of Arabism within the Islamic civilization. Though a Persian, living in Persia at a time when the political hegemony of the Arabs was a thing of the past, he wrote all his philosophical and scientific works in Arabic. This, however, was inevitable, for, throughout the Muslim world, including Sicily and Spain, Arabic had become the language of science and learning.

Almost as extensively as on medicine and philosophy, Ibn Sina wrote on mathematics, music, geology and on problems of light, gravity, heat and motion. With his magisterial universality, the brilliance of his intellect, the catholicity of his tastes, his appreciation of what are called the 'good things of life', and, last but not least, the highly adventurous character of his life, he might be said to anticipate and to surpass the great characters of the Italian Renaissance at their most typical. The one aspect in which he differs from most of them was his very genuine devoutness; we know, for instance, that often when a scientific problem was proving intractable, Ibn Sina would withdraw into the mosque and spend long hours in prayer. Likewise, when the solution of a particularly difficult problem revealed itself, he would seek out the mosque and thank God for the boon conferred.

Though after Ibn Sina Arabian medicine in the Near East was never to produce a genius comparable to him, it does not follow that he is the last of the great physicians in that part of the world. None of his successors may have reached his renown, yet there were several whose contributions were of the very first significance. The discoveries of none of these were more revolutionary than those of Ibn al Nafis, an Egyptian or Syrian who died in 1289. Criticizing both Galen's and Ibn Sina's theory concerning the possible passages of venous blood between the ventricles, he proved himself a forerunner of William Harvey. He also discovered the fundamental principles of the pulmonary circulation, explaining that blood was purified in the lungs where it underwent refinement through contact with the air received from the outer atmosphere. His discoveries were three centuries in advance of those made in Europe. And yet, for hundreds of years, he remained practically unknown, and it is only at the present time that scholars are beginning to recognize his importance.

When, by the eleventh century, Islamic science had begun to decline in the Near East, its golden period was just beginning in the

West, that is, in Morocco and Spain. In the Maghreb, too, to be a great doctor usually meant being a cabinet minister or the personal adviser to the ruling prince as well. A famous physician at the court of the Moroccan Almohades was Ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar). His *Facilities of Treatment* (*al Taysir*) differed from the usual compendia and encyclopedias so beloved by Muslim doctors in that it was based chiefly on its author's personal clinical experiences. It was yet one more of the numerous books by Arab doctors destined to enjoy great popularity among their European colleagues.

The most outstanding name in medicine in western Arabism was that of Ibn Rushd (Averroës), the great Aristotelian philosopher, who, as we already know, held various important posts under several Almohade kings. Among his books on medicine, pride of place goes to his *General Rules of Medicine* (*Kulliyat fit Tibb*). In it, unlike so many of his colleagues, he did not give mere summaries of Greek and Arab medical knowledge but compared and analysed the two, collating the work of such Muslims as Razi and Ibn Zuhr with that of Galen and Hippocrates.

It was western Arabism that gave the world the most concrete affirmation of the doctrine of the contagious character of disease. The immediate cause for that discovery was provided by the great plague that ravaged the world in the fourteenth century. Having started in India in 1332, the plague gradually reached eastern Russia at its one end, and then spread across Syria and Constantinople to southern Europe and finally, in 1338, Spain in the south and England in the north. Throughout Europe the plague was regarded merely as an 'act of God', even the scholars remaining in complete ignorance of the fact that it was caused by contagion, carried by rats and fleas. (A famous description of the plague is contained in Boccaccio's introduction to his *Decameron*.)

Whereas in most countries the plague produced a spate of pious tracts reeking with childish theology and rampant superstitions—the chief causes of the plague were said to be either the Jews or volcanic eruptions or the birth of a calf with two heads—two Moorish doctors wrote treatises based entirely on scientific observation. They were Ibn al Khatib of Granada (1313–1374), equally famous as a historian, statesman and author, and Ibn Khatima (1323–1369), a doctor, poet and historian.

Ibn Khatib was the author of a number of distinguished historical works dealing chiefly with various aspects of Spanish and Moroccan history. He also wrote books on travel and literary essays, and he became famous for the elegance of his style and his linguistic innovations. During most of his life he was a vizier at the famous court of the Nasrids at the Alhambra in Granada. From a scientific point of view, his most important work is his treatise *On the Plague*, remarkable for its courage and for its convincing argumentation in defence of the idea of contagion. For indeed it required courage for a Muslim to oppose himself to views not merely held by the whole of his own community but sanctified by the Hadith, that is the Traditions concerning the life and the sayings of the Prophet. Yet in propounding his medical theories, Ibn Khatib contradicted the Hadith. 'It must be a principle', he wrote, 'that a proof taken from the Traditions has to undergo modification when in manifest contradiction with the evidence of the perception of the senses.' Ibn Khatib gave proof of a like independence of mind and moral courage in writing his other medical treatise *Amal Man Tabba Liman Habba*, dedicated to one of the Merinid kings of Morocco. For besides dealing with general problems of medicine, he tackled, in a final chapter, matters as controversial as abortion (which he approved of in cases where the life of the potential mother might be endangered); the advocacy of aphrodisiacs for national and social reasons; and the use of wine for medical purposes.

Ibn Khatib also wrote a biography of his colleague Ibn Khatima whose treatise on the plague is even more significant than his own. Ibn Khatima wrote it in 1349 when the Black Death was at its height in Almeria in Spain where he lived. His findings were based entirely on his own observations. We find in his treatise the then revolutionary sentence 'The result of my long experience is that if a person comes into contact with a patient, he is immediately attacked by the disease with the same symptoms . . . and the second patient likewise transmits the disease'. Ibn Khatima does not disdain a pre-occupation with the theological aspects of the plague, but lays most of his emphasis on the contagious nature of the disease, and on therapeutics and prophylaxy.

Neither of the two great doctors produced a watertight, systematic definition of contagion. Scientific knowledge was not sufficiently advanced for that, and another two hundred years were to elapse

before Gerolamo Fracastoro's work *De Contagione* could appear. In fact, the decisive statement on the true nature of infection was not to be made until modern times with Pasteur's bacteriological discoveries. Nevertheless, Ibn Khatib and Ibn Khatima were the first to give clinical accounts of contagion, thus revolutionizing the medical conceptions of the time.

In Europe, throughout the early Middle Ages, medicine was practised mainly either by quacks or by some devoted but not very learned monks. During the same period, Islam was producing some of history's most distinguished theoreticians and practitioners in the medical craft. In Muslim countries the profession of a doctor was deemed to be among the most honourable ones, and its practitioners enjoyed high social standing. Numerous accounts have been preserved of fabulous fees paid to doctors for their services. As we should expect, the Muslims developed at quite an early date the institution of hospitals. Baghdad already had its first hospital during the reign of Harun al Rashid, that is, in the very first years of the ninth century. During that century several new hospitals were added. Cairo's first hospital, too, dates from the ninth century. By the eleventh century we find a number of travelling hospitals in various parts of the Muslim world.

Even the earliest Islamic hospitals were divided into wards for men and wards for women, each with its own dispensary. Some of them maintained their own gardens in which herbs and medicinal plants were cultivated. The larger hospitals would contain a medical school in which the prospective doctors might obtain their diploma. Not only doctors but also druggists and barbers who performed certain surgical operations were subject to official inspection.

We have reason to believe that when, during the Crusades, Europe at last began to establish hospitals, they were inspired to do so by the example set for them by the Arabs of the Near East. For, at that time, both the Seljuk and Mamluk rulers had founded magnificent new hospitals both at Damascus and Cairo. (The Crusaders, of course, never reached Baghdad, which, by the mid-thirteenth century, anyhow had been razed to the ground by the Mongols.) The first hospital in Paris, *Les Quinze-Vingt*, was founded by Louis IX after his return from the Crusade of 1254-1260. But the Christian doctors of this period did not inspire much respect in their Arab colleagues. We have a number

of accounts in which Muslim chronicles describe contemptuously the ignorance and the barbaric practices of Christian doctors. Once, however, the first rays of intellectual light were able to penetrate the darkness in which Europe had been engulfed ever since the fall of the Roman Empire, Western scholars began to turn eagerly towards Arabian science, and the works of Muslim doctors were, as mentioned, translated into Latin and used avidly at European universities and by Christian doctors.

## IV CHEMISTRY, ALCHEMY AND PHYSICS

Most of the Muslim doctors took a great interest in pharmaceuticals. Many of them were also chemists and alchemists. Though eventually alchemy came into disrepute, to Muslim scholars it merely represented the more spiritual (or esoteric) side of a distinctly scientific discipline. The very word alchemy (*al kimiya*) is of Arab origin. The Arabs regarded alchemy as originating in Egypt, and they associated its name with the black earth (*kam-it* or *kem-it*) of Egypt, or, rather, of the Nile Delta.

While the laboratory methods of the Muslim alchemists were sufficiently scientific to enable them to make a number of important chemical discoveries, their ultimate aim went beyond mere chemical science. Their alchemical pursuits must be regarded as a kind of *exercitium spiritualis*, a spiritual discipline for which the laboratory discipline was merely an outward vehicle and symbol. In their efforts to purify chemical substances sufficiently to find, finally, one that would enable them to transmute baser metals into gold, they sought simultaneously an inner purification of their own selves and a refinement of their spiritual faculties. This is in fact what every genuine artist, whether consciously or unconsciously, is trying to bring about. In his attempt to refine and develop both his vision and a technique that will permit him to give that vision its perfect physical expression, he purifies himself spiritually from all the dross that would have prevented him from reaching his ultimate artistic aim. Alchemy was indeed as much an art as a science, and was so regarded by its practitioners.

Even within their purely alchemical researches the Muslim alchemists achieved by no means unimportant results. Thus, in their efforts to discover the elixir that would permit them to transform baser metals into higher ones, they often hit on the catalytic properties of an element or a substance that had been unknown before. And in our present century, a century of electrons rather than of 'solid matter', the transformation of one element into another appears far less fantastic than it did to the men of old who decried Islamic alchemy.

The most famous name in Muslim alchemy is that of Jabir Haiyan, the alchemist Geber of the Middle Ages who lived in Kufa in the eighth century. To the present day Jabir remains a somewhat mysterious personality, for apart from writings that we know to be his, there are many others which for the best part of a thousand years have been going under his name, even though we know that they cannot possibly have been written by him. A similar discrepancy pervades the writings that none the less seem definitely his. Some of these are full of anthropomorphic and animistic interpretations that are quite unacceptable to a scientific mind; others show remarkably sound and progressive views on chemical research. Thus we owe to him the first known preparation of such substances as arsenic and antimony from their sulphides; a theory on the geological formation of metals; the so-called sulphur-mercury theory of metals. He also did important work on the preparation of steel, on the use of manganese dioxide in glass-making, and on the imponderability of magnetic force. And it is from him that chemistry received such terms as alembic, antimony, alkali and the substance known as sal-ammoniac. Those of Jabir's books which attracted the greatest attention and which were translated into Latin in the twelfth century by the two greatest Christian translators of the time, Gerard of Cremona and Robert of Chester, were the *Book of the Composition of Alchemy* and the *Book of the Seventy*.

Jabir's work was further advanced by the great doctor Razi, already spoken of, who, like the former, wrote both on chemistry and alchemy. In his *Book of the Art [of Alchemy]* he gave exact classifications of substances and of chemical processes, revealing a deep and accurate insight into the nature of chemistry proper as compared with alchemy.

The full significance of the chemical and alchemical writings of Jabir and his successors cannot, as yet, be realized. For a great deal in that field still awaits careful editing and scholarly analysis and interpretation.

While Muslim accomplishments in the fields of chemistry were sufficiently valuable to become the basis for the work of Western scientists of the Middle Ages, Muslim achievements in physics were relatively inconsiderable. Physics deal with the purely physical or mechanical interplay between physical forces. Such forces were regarded by many Muslims as being closer to that substratum of matter that was farther removed from the Deity than were alchemy and chemistry. On the whole they took little interest in physics and pure mechanics. Only when physics could be related to functions that were not exclusively mechanical would they consider them as worthy of study. Thus we find Muslim scientists deeply interested in the functioning and the making of clocks. Now clocks are machines which, by recording the progress of time from one moment to another, indicate the living nature of the universe and thus of the ever-living God. Al Biruni and other Muslim astronomers, as we remember, envisaged the universe as a dynamic 'becoming', and thus as a proof of God's eternal manifestation in the phenomenal world. Everything that denoted the close relationship between the world and its Maker was of supreme concern to Muslim thinkers and scientists. Movement produced solely by man, such as we find in mechanical contraptions, was of less interest to them than movement caused by forces that are more obvious manifestations of divine creativeness. Thus we find Muslim scientists devoting much labour to the making of clocks moved by water or mercury or, even, by burning candles. The force of water, or mercury, or fire, and the movement produced by any of these, seemed a direct illustration of the living nature of the universe and of the Deity from which it derived its life.

One of Islam's most famous clocks was that at Damascus made by Muhammad ibn Ali which was run by water. Thanks to the account of it written by its maker's son Ridwan, in 1203, that clock remained famous until the sixteenth century. Many books, often embellished by fascinating illustrations, were also written by Muslims on other clocks and on all manner of hydrostatic automata.

In their lighter moments, and to satisfy the fancies of their patrons, Muslim scientists would turn their attention to mechanical toys. These toys were extremely popular with the princes and the gentlemen and ladies at the various Arab courts. (This fashion, incidentally, was not confined to Muslim courts. It was equally popular at the princely courts of Renaissance Italy, and at the various European courts of that time. We find its belated manifestation in the passion with which the last Tsar of Russia and his family patronized the jeweller Fabergé and his ingenious Easter eggs and other mechanical and bejewelled playthings.) Mechanical toys almost invariably figured among the presents exchanged among Muslim princes and the gifts at royal weddings and other festivities. What particularly impressed the envoys of Constantine VII of Byzantium on their official visit, in 917, to the Caliph al Muqtadir, was the Hall of the Tree which contained a tree made of gold and silver, in the branches of which automatic birds of gold moved about chirruping gaily.

Such non-utilitarian devices play, however, a subordinate part in the preoccupations of Muslim scientists. As has already been mentioned, the mechanics that interested them most were those depending, in one way or another, upon water or, in fact, the 'mechanics' of water itself. In agricultural countries with a small rainfall, and thus depending upon irrigation, the possibilities of harnessing the power and exploiting the virtues of water are enduringly interesting. Many books by Egyptian, Iraqi and Moroccan writers deal with water elevation and balances, with basin and channel irrigation, with aqueducts and water wheels. Kindi wrote on tides and meteorology; the earliest known Muslim work on mechanics, the ninth-century *Book of Artifices*, by the sons of Musa ibn Shakir, deals, among other themes, with water and wells, drinking vessels and vessels for hot and cold water.

As we should expect, the Muslims did much useful work in their studies of the nature and the functions of light, especially in relation to man, concentrating on optics. It is, of course, the eye that perceives the light, and Islamic science was greatly concerned with that important organ. Because of the strong light and the prevalence of sand and dust in the Near East, eye diseases were, and are, very common in that part of the world. Thus, unlike most of their European



colleagues, Muslim doctors were constantly being confronted with problems concerning light and the human eye.

Abu Ali Hasan ibn al Haytham (Alhazen) of Basrah (965) was the first scholar to attempt to refute the then generally accepted optical doctrines of Euclid and Ptolemy. According to those doctrines, the eye received images of various objects by sending out visual rays to those objects. In his book *On Optics*, Alhazen proved that the process is the very reverse. In so doing, he laid the foundations of modern optics. His own classical formula was: 'It is not a ray that leaves the eye and meets the object that gives rise to vision. Rather the form of the perceived object passes into the eye and is transmuted by its transparent body', i.e. the lens. Alhazen also did essential spadework for the much later discovery in Italy of magnifying lenses. Most of the medieval writers on optics, including Roger Bacon, used Alhazen's findings as their starting point, especially his *Opticae Thesaurus*, a book that left its mark even on Leonardo da Vinci and Johann Kepler. Alhazen's writings are rooted in very sound mathematical knowledge, a knowledge that enabled him to propound well-nigh revolutionary doctrines on such subjects as the halo and the rainbow, eclipses and shadows, and on spherical and parabolic mirrors.

Alhazen's work was carried on by a number of Muslim scientists, one of the last of real importance being the Persian Kamal al Din, of the fourteenth century, best known for his explanation of primary and secondary rainbows and his experiments with the camera obscura. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the three most famous of the questions whose explanations Frederick II of Hohenstauffen sought from Muslim scientists dealt with optics. They were: what is the cause of the illusion of floating specks before the eyes of those suffering from incipient cataract? Why do oars or lances, partly covered with water, appear to be bent? And why does Canopus appear bigger when near the horizon, whereas the absence of moisture in the southern deserts precludes moisture as an explanation?

## V BOTANY, AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE

For people who live in hot and partly arid countries with relatively little water, plants become something far more precious than they

can ever become in countries with an abundant vegetation. One of the features that invariably roused the curiosity of Muslim travellers in foreign countries was plant life. They studied, collected and described plants, and Europe can thank them for the source of most distinguished contributions to early botanical science. With their strongly developed practical sense they were particularly interested in plants that might serve some utilitarian purpose, whether in agriculture or in medicine. As Professor Sarton points out: 'By far the most important herbalistic tradition in almost every respect was the Arabic or Muslim one. . . . These excellent tendencies, without equivalent in Christendom, were continued during the first half of the thirteenth century by an admirable group of four botanists.' One of these Ibn al Baitar, 'compiled the most elaborate Arabic work on the subject (botany), in fact the most important for the whole period extending from Dioscorides down to the sixteenth century. It was a true encyclopedia on the subject, incorporating the whole of Greek and Arabic experience.'

Botany was only part of Ibn al Baitar's life-interest. He also described more than 1,400 medicinal drugs and plants throughout the Mediterranean area.

As has already been indicated, the Muslims took the keenest interest in pharmacology, and produced a very large number of books on that subject. Many of the recipes contained in the writings of the fourteenth-century Jewish author Kohen al Attar and of the sixteenth-century Dawud al Antaki were adopted by European druggists; and so were some of the original Arab or Persian names, such as syrup from the Arab *sharab*, *rob* for a particular mixture of honey and fruit juice, and julep from the Persian *gulab*, or rose-water, for a medicinal aromatic drink.

Since farming provided the chief source of income for the caliphs and other Muslim princes, and since most of their subjects lived by agriculture, husbandry received much attention both from the rulers and the ruled. The Muslims must in fact be regarded as the first people in the post-Roman world to approach the problems of agriculture in a scientific frame of mind. It is only natural, as observed above, that in the Near Eastern countries with their notorious scarcity of water, much attention should be paid to problems of irrigation. The Arab

inhabitants of Iraq and Egypt, Spain and Morocco proved themselves second to none in the arts of basin-and-channel irrigation, water-storage, syphoning and the drilling of wells, in sum, in any aspect of a scientific utilization of available sources of water. When in 1912 the French came with their modern techniques, and occupied backward Morocco, they had to admit that there was nothing they could teach the illiterate Moorish farmers about the various branches of small-scale irrigation, *la petite hydraulique*.

However important the contribution of the Arabs to irrigation, their most spectacular gift to European agriculture was comprised in the variety and numbers of new plants they introduced, for the list includes some of our most popular fruits and vegetables. Thus we owe to their transplanting our oranges and lemons, peaches and apricots, rice, sugar-cane and coffee, pomegranates and saffron. At a time when the Arabs had already introduced sugar to Spain, the rest of Europe was still unaware of its existence, and few of the new discoveries the Crusaders made at a later date in the Holy Land delighted them more than this sugar-cane; until that time honey had been the main sweetening ingredient known to the Christian world.

Books on agriculture and horticulture were as common among the Arabs as were those on plants and drugs. This applied particularly to the Arabs of the west, that is of Spain and Morocco. The most famous of such books was compiled by the twelfth-century agriculturist, Ibn al Awwam of Seville, his treatise *Kitab al falaha*. At least one Western expert considers it to be 'the most important medieval work on the subject' (Sarton, ii, 1, p. 424). This book makes use not only of the whole body of ancient agricultural lore and of existing Greek and Arab material on the subject, but, even more convincingly, of the author's own practical experience. It deals with 585 different plants and the cultivation of over 50 fruit trees, with different kinds of soil and fertilizers, with methods of grafting, with sympathies and antipathies between plants (a subject usually considered to be a modern discovery), with plant diseases and cures, and with the raising of cattle, bees and poultry.

The famous gardens of Persia, Morocco or Andalusia attest to the Muslims' great interest in horticulture and their love of flowers. The walled-in gardens of Persia and the patio-gardens of Andalusia and Morocco are among the most fascinating examples of the garden-

builder's art. With their jealously guarded privacy, their tiled floors, their murmuring fountains or rivulets of water, their apparently casual yet perfectly thought out arrangements of trees, shrubs and flowers, and their subtle insight into the aesthetic relationship between architecture and vegetation, they introduced an entirely novel conception of garden-making. Less dramatic than the gardens of Italy, less grandiose or formal than those of France, on a much smaller scale than 'English' gardens, they were far more intimately related to the life of those who dwelled within them. Countless gardens throughout the Near East and Persia, at the Alhambra in Spain, at the Oudayas in Rabat, still proclaim the infinite charm of these inspired creations.

Closely allied to the Muslims' love of flowers was their passion for the scents extracted from these. Damascus, Shiraz and Jur became famous for their attar (Arab: *itr*) of red roses and their essences of violets, oranges, jasmine and water-lilies. Equally popular for the essences they yielded were iris, narcissus, myrtle, lemon and palm flower. Persian and Arabian perfumes were eagerly sought by buyers from as far away as Europe in the west and China in the east.

Since the days of the Renaissance, science in the West has dissociated itself ever more markedly from religion or, to put it differently, science has pursued its own way with little regard for the demands of ethics and morality. While man came to gain an ever-increasing knowledge of, and mastery over, the physical universe, his moral progress lagged far behind. By freeing science, in the Middle Ages, from the domination of the Church, the West divorced science not merely from denominational dogma but likewise from theistic conceptions and the moral restraints inherent in them. Islamic science, as we have seen, never separated itself from religion. In fact, religion provided its chief motive force and inspiration. In Islam both philosophy and science came into existence not to supplant the 'primitive' theism of religion, but to explain it intellectually, to prove and glorify it. It is thus not surprising that Islamic science never became dehumanized—as it did in the West—but always was at the service of man. Likewise, while Western science at a comparatively early age was forced into specialization, each of its branches functioning more or less in isolation, Islamic science remained universalist, striving

## THE SCIENCES

towards unity, a unity in which not only the physical universe but both God and man played their decisive parts.

It is impossible to tell whether that unity could have been maintained if, with the disappearance of the Islamic Empire, Arabian science had not come to an end. Ibn Rushd, one of the last great exponents of the Muslims' scientific genius, maintained that the truths of religion and the truths of philosophy (and thus of science) must be kept separate. It may be that, with the post-Renaissance acquisition of new scientific knowledge, the separation of science from religion became inevitable. Nevertheless the historical fact remains that, for half a millennium, the Muslims succeeded in making decisive advances in the various sciences without turning their backs on religion and its truths, and found the fusion quickening rather than frustrating.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Sarton, George: *Introduction to the History of Science*. Baltimore, 1927-1948.  
Arnold, T. W. (ed.): *Legacy of Islam*. Oxford, 1931.

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE SCIENCES

<i>Astronomy and Mathematics</i>	MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
	Muslim ideal: the infinite.	Greek ideal of beauty, based on proportions and numbers as finite magnitudes. Space and time static, the universe a 'being'.
al Khwarizmi, 780-850	Invents a 'modern' algebra, transforms numbers into elements of relation.	
al Battani, 858-929	Substitutes chord by sine; uses tangents and cotangents; introduces notions of trigonometrical ratios.	
Abu'l Wafa, 940-997	Invents new method of constructing sine tables; introduces secant and cosecant; anticipates Copernicus.	
al Biruni, 973-1048	Determines latitudes and longitudes; invents 'Albirunic' problems; transforms numbers from magnitudes to elements of function. Universe—a 'becoming'.	In the twelfth century Gerard of Cremona, Robert of Chester and other Latin scholars translate Arabic works on mathematics and astronomy.
Omar Khayyam, 1038-1123	Invents an advanced algebra; prepares calendar more accurate than the Gregorian; author of the Rubaiyat.	For 250 years (until twelfth century) Europe refuses to adopt decimal system.
Muslims introduce Arabic numerals, the zero ( <i>sifr</i> ), and the decimal system (ninth century)		

*Geography and Cartography*  
Khalif Mamun, 813-833

#### MUSLIM WORLD

Orders the measurement of a geographical degree and the preparation of an 'image of the earth'.

The astronomers al Farghani (c. 860), al Battani (c. 900), al Biruni (c. 1030) prepare geographical tables of longitude and latitude.

Muslim seafarers, merchants and pilgrims collect new information on foreign countries.

al Masudi, 912-957

Writes first scientific historico-geographical encyclopedia.

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al Idrisi, 1099-1166

Conceives the earth as spherical; produces accurate maps; author of *Roger's Book*; writes geographical encyclopedia.

Translated in Rome in 1619.

al Hamawi, 1179-1229

Writes encyclopedia on geography and science. Arab theory of a 'world summit' or 'cupola of Arin' greatly influences Christian scholars, and determines views of Columbus.

Ibn Battuta, 1304-1369

One of the greatest travellers of all times; greatly advances knowledge of Middle East and Asia.

Leo Africanus, 1495-1550

Great traveller, writes first comprehensive book on Africa.

Instantly translated in Europe.

#### EUROPE AND THE WEST

The Greeks, especially Ptolemy, provide the basis for Arab geographical endeavours.

Medicine

	MUSLIM WORLD	EUROPE AND THE WEST
Hunayn ibn Ishaq, 810-877	First translator of Greek medical works; author of original books on medicine.	The Greeks, especially Galen and Hippocrates, provide the basis for Arab medicine.
al Razi, 865-925	One of the greatest doctors of all times; gives first clinical account of measles and small-pox; writes most comprehensive book on medicine.	Frequently translated in Europe, greatly influences Western doctors.
Ibn Sina (Avicenna), 980-1037	Most influential Muslim scholar. Author of <i>Canon of Medicine</i> . Recognizes contagious character of disease.	European translations from twelfth to seventeenth centuries; chief medical influence in the West.
15 Ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar), 1091-1161	Famous physician at Almohade court in Morocco, whose <i>Facilities of Treatment</i> greatly influenced European doctors.	
Ibn Rushd (Averroës), 1126-1198	Leading doctor, but more famous as a philosopher.	
Ibn Khatib, 1313-1374	Historian, statesman and doctor, whose <i>On the Plague</i> defends the idea of contagion.	
Ibn Khatima, 1323-1369	Author of the most important medieval treatise on the plague. Together with Ibn Khatib replaces earlier Greek conception of man as self-contained entity by one of man as interrelated member of the universal family.	



*Chemistry, Alchemy and Physics*

Jabir ibn Haiyan, c. 776

MUSLIM WORLD

Father of Islamic chemistry and alchemy, prepares a number of new chemical substances; important work on metals and glass-making; introduces various chemical terms into European languages. Leading alchemist.

al Razi, 865-925

More famous as doctor, gives exact classification of substances and chemical processes. Leading alchemist.

Ikhwan as Safa (Brothers of Purity), tenth-century politico-scientific movement

Produces a number of chemical and alchemical tracts, some of which appear under Jabir's name.

In physics, chief Muslim preoccupation is with clocks and devices depending upon the power of water. Mechanical toys.

al Haytham (Alhazen), 965-1039

First scientist to correct Ptolemy's erroneous optical doctrines. Lays foundations of modern optics. Earliest use of the camera obscura.

EUROPE AND THE WEST

Greek chemistry and Greek and Egyptian alchemy are the chief influences. First Latin translation by Robert of Chester, in twelfth century.

Influences medieval writers on optics, including Roger Bacon, Kepler, Leonardo da Vinci.

*Botany, Agriculture and Horticulture*

## MUSLIM WORLD

## EUROPE AND THE WEST

Muslims introduced to Europe oranges, lemons, peaches, apricots, pomegranates, saffron, coffee, the cultivation of sugar-cane and rice; also a number of medicinal plants, and advanced methods of irrigation. The scientific approach to agriculture is due to them.

Ibn al Awwam, end of  
thirteenth century

Writes the most important medieval treatise on agriculture. Deals scientifically with grafting, manure, cures for plant diseases.

French and Spanish translations of his main book appeared in the nineteenth century.

Ibn al Baitar, d. 1248

Greatest medieval botanist and pharmacist, writes the most complete botanical compendium and deals extensively with drugs and foods.

Europe recognized his importance only in the nineteenth century.

Islam's distinctive horticultural contributions are the introduction of various flowers to Europe and the Persian and Moorish ('Andalusian') gardens. Certain Islamic fruit products, and their names, were taken over by Europe, e.g. julep, syrup, attar. Arab and Persian perfumes were very popular throughout the West.

## CHAPTER 11

### LITERATURE

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FROM the literary point of view as well as from the historical, Arabic literature provides a particularly fertile field for investigating Arabic life and institutions. Unlike other Semitic peoples, who for the most part have disappeared leaving only a small fragmentary and filmy record, the Arabs have left an astonishing amount of manuscript materials for studying various phases of their development since the sixth century. The Escorial of Spain, the al-Azhar of Cairo, and the mosques of Istanbul are today some of the important manuscript centres.

Arabic, the language of this vast literature dating from about A.D. 500, is the youngest of the Semitic languages. Even quite early, the Bedouin of pre-Islamic times, with a primitive culture based on the limited tribal structure, developed a poetic language and poetic form that became the pattern for most Arabic poetry which was to follow. It is sometimes said that, for the Arab, language is the most congenial means of self-expression, and that he is born with what is called a 'gift of the gab'. In brief, Arabs generally display a penchant for their language and love to talk.

That this language is a remarkably concise vehicle for expression of thought is revealed in the meaning of the words *Islam*, which signifies 'peace through the submission to the will of God', and *Muslim* which is 'a man who derives such peace therein'. Arab grammarians recognized only three parts of speech: noun, verb and particle. But a richness of language was obtained by deriving new words from old roots thereby giving new meaning to old words and allowing for shades of meaning. This process built a highly vivid, concrete and pictorial vocabulary which lent itself well to literature in general and poetry in particular.

Contact with, and conquest of other peoples, provided other

methods by which the language was enriched. When the desert conquerors burst beyond the bounds of the Arabian peninsula, Arabic was on its way to becoming an imperial language. Being a dynamic rather than a static force, it expanded and adopted new words and expressions. Even in the pre-Islamic poetry there are foreign words, and there are many more, of course, in the period of the conquests. Administrative terms were borrowed from Persian and Greek, theological and religious terms from Hebrew and Syriac, and scientific and philosophic terms from Greek.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the whole of the conquests, however, Arabic remained the chief medium of expression.

By the eleventh century, Arabic had become the most important language of common use from Moorish Spain to Muslim India. Language as the chief instrument of culture took the place of old culture languages such as Coptic, Aramaic, Greek, Syriac and Latin. Arabic had become the language of the Court and Church, of literature and science. It was the binding tie that holds even today.

Where areas were not permanently Arabized, the Arabic language influenced other Muslim languages. Just as English was greatly influenced by Greek and Latin, the new languages of Muslim Persian and Turkish, Urdu, Malay and Swahili include a large Arabic vocabulary and were written in the Arabic script. When the political unity of Islam dissolved, classical Arabic was no longer the common speech of the Muslim world. In Arabia itself, in Syria, Egypt and other Arabic-speaking countries, a vulgar colloquial idiom was used. But this does not mean that Arabic disappeared. On the contrary, in many of these countries it is still the language of business, literature and education. The study and recitation of the Koran today is still usually the first step in the education of every Muslim. Theoretically, every Muslim ought to read the Koran in the Arabic text.

A rich and expressive language, then, that casts its spell and influence over millions of people, offered a marvellous means for the development of literature. But something of a paradox exists in an analysis of this literature which without doubt is first-rate from the point of view of form and pure technique. We might suppose that

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lewis: *The Arabs in History*, 3rd ed., p. 134, Hutchinson's University Library. London 1956.

since the Arab himself is a highly and intensely individualized human being, he might also reveal this characteristic as an expression of himself in his literature. Yet this does not follow when his heritage from Islam is considered. In Islam it is true that the individual does not matter as such, except in his union with God. Therefore the Muslim strives for loss of individuality through unity with God. Utter submission to the divine rules out the possibility of great personal and psychological speculation.

So in Arabic literature there is not the equivalent of a Dante, a Shakespeare, a new Donne, or a modern-day Virginia Woolf or James Joyce. It is the generic type rather than individual psychological traits that interests the Arabic writer. We find an unending procession of formalized types—the warrior, wazier, caliph, saint, fool and young man or woman in love, rather than individual warriors, rulers, lovers, etc. But if the writer clings to types and fails on individuals, he is often a supreme master when it comes to style and detail. For it is in this realm that his true artistry arises and his particular genius flowers. If the subject-matter is routine, the reader discovers an astonishing originality of presentation. Metaphors, similes and techniques of language are used with an almost acrobatic skill giving a lively and varied effect.

The pre-Islamic poems that have been preserved down to our time probably originated in the century before Islam (A.D. 500–622). But their precise and polished form provides evidence enough that there must have been a long period of poetic art that preceded even these first-known examples. Few among the early Arabs were able to read or write, so there was largely only a spoken literature at this time. Just as it was with the Rhapsodists who kept alive the works of Homer in Greece, this literature was carried on by oral tradition, and committed to writing long afterwards. Not until the late Umayyad period and the early Abbasid age did scholars write down and revere these earliest classics. Until that time, the institution of the *Rawi* or professional reciter was used. The Djema el Fna Square in modern-day Marrakesh maintains a remnant of this institution in its professional story-tellers.

The *Jahiliyya* (Age of Barbarism or Ignorance) was the name given by Muslim writers to the classical age that preceded the Hegira. At

this time there was no prose literature. Rather it was the privilege and, indeed, the duty of the poet to tell in poetic form the history of his people, citing genealogies, celebrating feats of arms, and praising their virtues. The poet filled a peculiarly important function in early Arabic society. The coming to light of a poet or *sha'ir* was a great occasion and cause for celebration among the Arabs. As his name implies, the *sha'ir* (he who knows) was believed to possess supernatural knowledge and exercise magical powers. The pagan poet in reality was the sooth-sayer (*kahin*) or oracle of his tribe who guided its members in peace and spurred them to victory in war. The nomadic Bedouin striking out across the desert wastes continually in search of water and new pastures turned to him for counsel in gaining new oases.

The oldest form given to poetical speech was *Saj*, or rhyme without metre. Muhammad later was to use the same form in the Koran, and for this he has been accused of being a poet. Although clearly rhetorical, rhymed prose is not the same as blank verse, a form alien to the Arab.

The first metre that developed came from *Saj* and was known as *Rajaz*. It is an irregular iambic metre usually consisting of four to six feet to the line, and all lines, no matter if there are a hundred, rhyme with each other. The *Rajaz* first appeared in the camel driver's song (*Hida*), where it is believed to have originated. A camel-riding boy who had injured his hand may have cried out and repeated in non-Stoic fashion with the uncomfortably rhythmic pace of the poor beast he was riding, 'ya, ya da; ya, ya da!' (Oh, my hand!). At any rate, quite unconsciously this prosodic metre originated in the desert experiences of the native Bedouin who used his intuitive sense of poetic rhythm.

If the greatest contributions of Arab civilization in the spiritual realm were given in language, the highest achievement, according to the Arabs, besides the Koran was poetry. The classical period or Golden Age of poetry began with the sixth century A.D., when poets throughout most parts of the peninsula were composing in the same poetical dialect and following similar rules of composition. These were followed rigidly down to the end of the Umayyad period when they were questioned for a time by nonconformists under the Abbasid dynasty only to be re-established as the mode down to the present day.

The most important form known in the classical age was the

*Qasida* or ode, which consisted of various numbers of verses, *uswas* in not less than twenty-five or more than a hundred. The poet might use any metre he wanted except *Rajaz*, which was believed beneath the dignity of the glorious ode. This was the only freedom he was permitted, however, for the choice of subjects and the method of handling them were clearly prescribed for his close adherence.<sup>1</sup> His first duty was to call to mind a deserted encampment of his own or a friendly tribe and then to beseech his companions with whom he is travelling to stop in order that he might address the former occupants. At this point he attaches an erotic prelude (*nasib*); or, sometimes, he substitutes a detailed account of the ever-important camel or horse. He describes the sensations of exhaustion caused by travelling at night and in the heat of day. The waters are brackish and turbid; the vegetation thorny and desiccated. Finally he reaches his goal—the home of some patron in whose honour the poem has been composed, and it is there that he delivers a panegyric. The pre-Islamic ode reveals Bedouin desert life to a considerable extent through descriptions of ideal heroic virtues and accounts of animal life.

Much of what is known of the character and customs of the Arabs in the sixth century is revealed in the magnificent *Mu'allaqat*, the *Seven Long Poems* or *Suspended Poems*. Although there is no satisfactory explanation for the term *Suspended Poems*, the title is not contemporary with the poems themselves. It was probably applied at a much later date under the Umayyad dynasty by their compiler, Hammad-al-Rawiya, and merely suggests the place of honour they hold in Arabic literature rather than their suspension in letters of gold in the Kaaba at Mecca.<sup>2</sup>

The first and best known of the seven *Mu'allaqat* is by Imru'al Qays (died c. A.D. 540), who is also probably the greatest of the pre-Islamic poets. His position in Arabic literature is much the same that Chaucer occupies in English literature. If viewed in the light of later and more sophisticated times, his limitation of subject and description of realistic desert life seem unsuitable for the poetic form, even though

<sup>1</sup> Reynald A. Nicholson: *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 76. Cambridge: The University Press, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

the poems convey, often with exquisite charm, an accurate picture of Bedouin life. This life with basic and rugged virtues held pleasure and sensual enjoyment as its chief aim. The same attitude without spiritual or religious qualities is also reflected in the poets of the other six *Mu'allaqat*.

Besides these best known pre-Islamic odes which in their collected form were called a *diwan* (assembly), there were other notable collections of anthologies. An elaborate collection contemporary with the *Mu'allaqat* and named after its compiler, the philologist al-Mufaddal, is the *Mufaddaliyat*. It is a *diwan* containing some twenty odes and fragments, mainly from the lesser pre-Islamic poets. The *Al-Hamasa* or Poems of Bravery is an anthology compiled by the poet Abu Tamman in about 836. Unlike the *Mufaddaliyat*, which is a collection of complete odes, the *Hamasa* is an anthology of brilliant passages of poetry.

The first document of prose literature was the Koran itself. When there were signs that the number of reciters or of those who knew best the sayings of the Prophet was dangerously diminishing, it became the task of Muhammad's secretary, Zayd ibn-Thabit, to bring these sayings together in textual form. Abu Bakr had directed the work, and later, after a revision at the command of Uthman, the Koran took its standard and final form that has come down to us unchanged.

A brief scanning of the Koran shows that the style varies greatly according to the periods of the Prophet's life at which the revelation was received. The arrangement with the longer *suras* first, preceded by the *Fatiha* or short chapter of seven verses which opens the work, and then the shorter ones, is purely arbitrary. There is no historical sequence; rather, length is the only determining factor. Though lacking in unity of style, the predominant characteristic throughout is that of rhymed, rhetorical prose.

The older or short *suras* were revealed at Mecca before the Hegira and the newer or long *suras* belong to the Medina period. The short ones seem far more inspirational than the long; their sentences have a rhythmic connection even though there is no regular metre. Muhammad here is indeed the Prophet straining every nerve to arouse his people and to give them God's message. He does this in a manner that is totally original. To hear the *suras* recited in the original Arabic often produces something akin to a spellbinding or hypnotic



effect. Like other great works of art in language, the Koran was intended to be recited aloud, and it must be heard to be judged fairly and to be appreciated.

If the Koran represents the direct word of God—as is believed by all good Muslims—then its chief value rests in its contents rather than its literary form. That form, in spite of its uniqueness, did not establish the pattern for future poetry since, not being poetical in the true sense of the term, it could not serve as a model. As the actual word of God, it was beyond imitation—there simply was nothing like it. Therefore the accusations that the Koran, like a barbiturate, deadened the taste of Muslims for literature and placed it in a literary strait-jacket are somewhat far-fetched.

During the opening century of Islam, poetry for the most part remained pagan. Prose in a sense was affected by the Koran, but only in so far as harmony and rhythm were concerned. It was a natural Arab tendency to stress balance and parallelism in ideas.

An extremely valuable result of the writing down of the Koran was the standardization of the Arabic language. Formerly the alphabet consisted entirely of consonants. So vowel marks which were borrowed from Syriac and diacritical marks put above or below similar consonants served to render the Koranic text more exact. No doors must be left open to ambiguity or misinterpretation.

At Kufah and at Basrah in Iraq, where many of the Prophet's companions had gone to live, famous schools of grammar arose. Originally, military camps built by Umar, these two sister cities, and later Baghdad, became centres of renown for the scientific study of Arabic language and grammar. In the rapidly expanding Islamic empire, the need for instructing Muslim converts in the Arabic tongue and desire for keeping the purity of language in the interpretation of the Koran, provided the impetus for active interest in philology and lexicography.

With Arabic hegemony extending with an increasing momentum, it is surprising that poetry should have remained unaffected by the great expansionist movements. No trace of the epic exists. Again, it is a question of the familiar Bedouin ode, the *Qasida*, rather than accounts of the heroic deeds of Muslim warriors. If anything at all new is added, it is the love theme brought about by a more urban, cosmo-

politan, court society. Formerly used as the conventional prelude to an ode, the love theme among the Umayyads came to play a more prominent part and was sung for its own sake.

Foremost among the writers who placed emphasis on the erotic element were Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a (d. A.D. 719), the Don Juan of Mecca or Ovid of the Arabs, and his fellow-countryman Jamil. Both poets are almost the last of the purely peninsular or Bedouin school. The occasional poems which were developed were essentially of popular origin. A folk legend kept alive through the years in Persian and Turkish romances was the undying love of the hero Majnun for the legendary Layla. Pure Arab nationality no longer played an important part. The outsider, regardless of his nationality, became an Arab if he professed the Islamic faith and spoke and wrote the Arabic language. Arabic literature became a literature written in the Arabic language by men who were themselves Persians, Egyptians, Syrians or Arabs.

If the Umayyad Age in many ways was a period of incubation for the arts, this was especially true for literature. The few fragments we have from that time, chiefly in poetry, reveal only slight changes from pre-Islamic days. In effect, pre-Islamic Bedouin and Umayyad poetry being so similar, it has been suggested that possibly the two are contemporary—some of the former perhaps being a pious fraud forged by the Umayyads.

A triumvirate of great poets of the period were al-Akhtal (Ghiyath ibn Ghawth, c. 640–c. 710), al-Farazdaq (Hammam ibn Ghalib, c. 640–732) and Jarir (ibn 'Atiya, d. c. 729). The panegyric and satire had existed in the Pagan Age, but these forms under new conditions of city life were brought to fruition with a vengeance. Farazdaq and Jarir throughout their lives engaged in famous literary duels in which even the common people took an active interest. Akhtal, the Christian, joined in the *mêlée* on the side of Farazdaq. If words could kill, each of the three would have died a thousand times, for there was no limit to the abuse hurled back and forth.

When we consider the blatantly impious court of the Umayyads, it is not surprising that Akhtal, a Christian, was chosen as poet laureate. A confirmed tippler, he might well have scandalized a pious Muslim when he appeared unannounced in the presence of the caliph attired in gorgeous silks wearing a gold cross hung from a gold chain! He was a leader of party oratory, and as instrumental

in forming public opinion. Arab critics recognize him as the poet *par excellence* in panegyric, satire and erotic poetry.

The complexion of Umayyad prose as judged from the few remaining pieces that have come down to us, shows the secular and non-Muslim colouring of poetry.

The Umayyads had been unanimous to the point of absurdity in their agreement as to the excellence of pre-Islamic pagan poetry: no one could hope to compete with their poetic perfection. An inevitable reaction to this bias was brought about in the Abbasid age by two factors: a more religious spirit of the times, even though in name only; and the Persian influence as opposed to the tyranny of the Arab. Early in the ninth century Ibn Qutayba (d. A.D. 889) dared to criticize the prevailing current of literary criticism and suggested instead that the works of the classical writers as well as those of the moderns should be judged aesthetically rather than chronologically or philologically. Always the bold iconoclast, Abu Nuwas (d. c. A.D. 810) even earlier in the eighth century had ridiculed the formula of apostrophizing the deserted encampment and extolling Bedouin virtues.

The earliest of the illustrious poets of the new school who turned his back on the desert *qasidas* was Muti ibn Iyas. His poems in praise of love and wine are noted for their elegant expression and deep feeling. It is the mischievous Abu Nuwas, however, who shatters literary tradition most adroitly and becomes most prominent in the new group. As boon companion to Harun al Rashid, he has come down to us as something of a court jester in the *Thousand and One Nights*, but it is as an outstanding poet that we should remember him. He used satire, panegyric and elegy to great advantage and excelled in love- and wine-songs. No excesses in indulging the physical senses were too much for him. His debauchery and licentiousness were a reflection of life and manners prevailing at court and in high circles of society.

Al-Mutanabbi (Abu 'l-Tayyib Ahmad ibn Husayn, A.D. 915-965), meaning 'he who calls himself a prophet', received his name from the fact that, for a time, he fancied himself the founder of a new religion. With many Arab critics he is immensely popular and, indeed, some rank him as their greatest man of letters. But his reputation does not fare as well with Westerners who may be alienated by his over-refined manner of expression and fanciful imagery. However,

his successful use of rhetoric and grandeur of expression can only bring to mind a magnificent nineteenth-century poet like Victor Hugo at his best. Mutanabbi's brilliance and originality in use of rhythm and rhyme have endeared him unreservedly to the hearts of Arabs, and it is he who is sometimes thought of as the poet of modern Arab nationalism.

A poet who possibly has more immediate appeal today in the Western world is Abu 'l Ala al-Ma'arri (A.D. 973-1057). Born in Syria in 973, he became blind through smallpox at an early age. Unlike Mutanabbi, Ma'arri is more important for his matter than his manner; a reflective and philosophic mind found expression in a cynical and atheistic poetry. He believed that it was a crime to bring children into the world, and he disbelieved in the Koran as divine revelation. Religion was a fable created by the ancients. To heap insult on injury, he dared to copy the Koranic style, and wrote a similar work parodying the holy work. Always fearful of dogmas of any kind, he emphasized a humanitarian philosophy without religious connotation, and must be regarded as a rationalist and a 'free-thinker'. At his death, in 1057, at the age of 84, he had gained wealth and renown. Students who came to attend his lectures on literature formed a kind of Arab Academy. Considering his attacks on orthodoxy and the *status quo*, we can only attribute his freedom of movement and expression to the great tolerance shown by Islam.

Biography and history in addition to philology and lexicography were the direct outgrowth of the advance of Koranic study. A biography of the Prophet by Ibn Ishaq (d. 768) appeared early in Islam. Hadith as a fundamental basis of Muslim law made it necessary to collect all possible information as to the life of the lawgiver. Traditions relating to Muhammad appeared in almost geometric proportion. And it was, in fact, the Hadith which established the pattern for both biographical and historical works.

Meticulous detail was the keynote for these literary forms. The authors aimed at accuracy rather than at continuity or psychological insight. Events appeared without a connection, like beads left unstrung. Minor incidents were reported without motivation or justification as faithfully as were those of first magnitude. This method, however, offers the contemporary historian the delight of discovering

history that is written objectively. The collections which have no form other than chronology allow for no individual psychological interpretation. Every source is so well documented that history written in this method becomes itself a primary source.

One of the outstanding examples of a history written in this tradition of accuracy and completeness of detail is provided by the *Annals of the Apostles and the Kings* (Ta'rikhu 'l-Rusul wa-l-Muluk) by Tabari (Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir, A.D. 838-923). Universal and encyclopedic in scope, the *Annals* of Tabari, following the technique of *isnad*, attempts the superhuman task of relating each fact when possible by an eye-witness or contemporary, whose account came down through a series of narrators to the author. Thus this compilation is in reality a collection of original documents—the meat for which historians hunger. Since his history spans the period from the Creation to A.D. 915, it is little wonder that Tabari is credited with having written forty pages a day for forty years.

Another universal and comprehensive historian was Masudi (Ali ibn Husayn, d. A.D. 956), a native of Baghdad who has the reputation of being the 'Herodotus of the Arabs'. He used the topical method of historiography, grouping events around dynasties and kings. His style was lively and witty due to the use of historical anecdote. Part of his vast thirty-volume work has come down to us in the *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems* (Muruj udh-Dhahab wa Ma'adin ul-Jawahir). Covering all of world history and dealing with everything that struck the author as being interesting, it becomes far more an encyclopedia than a history book.

An invaluable work that can give us only some idea of the extent of scholarship of the times was the *Fihrist* or Index of Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Baghdadi (d. A.D. 995), who is better known by the title of his work. It is one of the richest mines of materials because of what it sets out to do. The equivalent of an enormously developed and extended Arabic cumulative book index, it indexes all books of all nations on all subjects appearing in Arabic. What is more, there are genealogies of authors and dates as well as all the pertinent biographical data. Unfortunately, this extraordinary bibliographical record is all that remains of most of the books it describes.

The *Obituaries of Eminent Men* (Wafayatu l'A'yan), by Ibn Khallikan (Shamsu l-Din Ibn Khallikan, A.D. 1211-1283) became the first Arab

'Dictionary of National Biography'. Arranged alphabetically rather than chronologically, this was the first account of the lives of all prominent Muslims. As was the pattern, the *Obituaries* shows the customary accuracy and objectivity.

The most important historian of Islam was Ibn Khaldun (A.D. 1332-1406). He was born in Tunis and spent most of his life in North Africa. His most famous work is the *Kitabu l-Ibar* (Book of Examples). Professor Toynbee has called the *Prolegomena* (Muqaddima) of that history 'the greatest work of its kind that has yet been created by any mind in any time or place'.<sup>1</sup> The famous preface shows a man who was an expert politician, economist and sociologist as well as historian. He can be called the father of modern-day sociology, vitally concerned with many of the same problems that occupy us today: the nature of society, the influence of climate and occupation on the character of groups, the best methods for education, etc. And, unlike his predecessors, he is not merely a chronicler but also an evaluator, analyst and critic whose observant eye misses nothing that is of relevance. He must indeed be called the first philosopher of history.

By the time the Abbasids came to power the Arabic language had become crystallized; but under Persian influence literature took on a new refinement, and Bedouin elements of terseness and incisiveness gave way to elegance and richness. Both the language and the times were ready for a prose literature that could adapt itself to a variety of means of expression. The development of *adab* or *belles-lettres*, the essay intended chiefly for pleasure and literary history, was inevitable.

*Adab* began with al-Jahiz (Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz, d. A.D. 869) of Basrah, who wrote books of an anecdotal and entertaining nature. The most popular was his *Book of Animals* (*Kitabu l-Hayawan*). Abdullah Ignu l-Muqaffa (d. c. A.D. 760), a Persian, translated fables out of Pehlevi into Arabic. Ibn Qutayba (Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Dinawari, d. A.D. 869), writing in the ninth century on *Accomplishments of the Secretary* (*Adabu l-Katib*) suggests Lord Chesterfield in setting down manners and morals of the perfect gentleman. A combined anthology of ancient and modern verse and literary history was Abu 'l-Faraj al-Isfahani's (d. A.D. 967) *Book of Songs* (*Kitabu 'l Aghani*) which appeared

<sup>1</sup> Arnold Toynbee: *A Study of History*, III, p. 322. London: Oxford University Press, 1935.

in the tenth century. It was a history of all Arabic poetry that had been set to music down to the author's time as well as a selection from important authors with anecdotal material.

Fiction was not particularly congenial to the Arab and consequently was little developed. The Arab with his realistic attitude craved a concrete person who actually existed rather than an imaginary character. Hence his inordinate preoccupation with historical personages such as the Prophet, the early caliphs and the various heroes of the Islamic past. A type of fiction which found great favour with Arab audiences was dramatic anecdote compiled in *maqamat* or assemblies, whose central character would be a garrulous and witty vagabond. Yet even here the subject-matter was subordinate to style. This form reached its culmination in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the works of al-Hamadhani (Badi'u 'l-Zaman al-Hamadhani, d. A.D. 1007) and al-Hariri (Abu Muhammad al-Qasim al-Hariri, A.D. 1054-1122). Hariri succeeded in making the frivolous character of Abu Zayd instructive as well as amusing, and he was a master of all manner of literary conceit. But then the Arab reader delighted in linguistic tricks, such as sentences that could be read backward as well as forward, or that consisted entirely of pointed or unpointed letters. It can truly be said that in no other literature have linguistic acrobatics reached similar heights.

The Arab work of fiction best known to Western readers is, of course, *The Thousand and One Nights*. This *Iliad* or *Odyssey* of the Arabs, arising, as it did, from a folk literature, developed over a long period of time out of numerous Oriental sources. Europe first received the book in 1704 through the translation by Antoine Galland, a French Orientalist. Immediately it became a great success and went through edition after edition. It found its way into every major language of Europe and Asia, and became more popular in many countries than in the Muslim world itself.

In England and France the influence of the *Arabian Nights*, which is the modern title for the work, has been incalculable. The book established a whole new fashion for Oriental tales, and many European writers embarked upon composing their own pseudo-Oriental romances. The magic formula for success that the *Nights* had provided for Western authors was adventure. It was this element of adventure that contributed so much to the later development of European

popular literature. If it had not been for the Arabic influence there might not have been a *Robinson Crusoe* or *Gulliver's Travels*.<sup>1</sup>

Altogether Arab literature was less influential in the West than were Arab philosophy, mathematics and science. Inevitably many of the essential qualities of any given literature are lost in translation. This is particularly true of Arab literature that hides so much behind a florid, extravagant language.

The heritage of Europe in literature had been that of Rome and Greece, with their fundamental simplicity, restraint and rationality. Arabic literature, on the other hand, though mostly impersonal, is highly emotional and romantic. It exalts human passion, but does so within the framework of formal rigidity. Nevertheless it left its mark on a certain European literature and the ideology that went with it.

The early notions of chivalry and platonic love with their idealization of women were carried over from Arab Spain to the songs of the troubadours and Provençal poets. Even in techniques of meter, stanza form and internal rhyme, the early Spanish love-lyric shows its debt to those of the Arabs. We find unmistakable Arab influences in such early classics as *Aucassin et Nicolette*, *Le Cid* and *Chanson de Roland*. Both Chaucer in the *Squire's Tale* and Boccaccio in the *Decameron* made use of Oriental tales.<sup>2</sup> In France a certain Oriental flavour is found in the work of Voltaire and Montesquieu; Goethe, Rückert and German romanticism in general show both Arabic and Persian influences. Indeed, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Arabism, if not Arab literature *per se*, becomes a significant force in the development of Western literature.

Arab literature reached its Golden Age at the time when Europe was shrouded in darkness. Unfortunately it has retained its rigid conventions of form and style, and in consequence the gap between spoken and written language kept widening, and the separation between literature and life increasing.

A first stirring in literary activity occurred in Syria in the nineteenth century, chiefly as a result of the work of French and American

<sup>1</sup> H. A. R. Gibb: *Legacy of Islam*, ed. by Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, p. 201. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.



educational missions. Growing numbers of Arabs, especially from Egypt and Syria, went to Europe in search of a modern education, and they brought back to their homelands examples of European literature. With the establishment of Arab printing presses, translations of European books began to appear. Gradually schools of criticism arose, and Arab writers embarked upon creative work that was based on French, English, German or American examples. Some of the best contemporary Arabic poetry was produced by Arab immigrants who settled in North and South America. The Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran, writing in the United States, in the 1920's and 1930's, did much to interpret the Arab mind to the West.

The past forty years in an Egypt engulfed in revolutionary turmoil have hardly been conducive to purely literary activity. The values and virtues stressed by nationalism are not necessarily identical with those of literature. The important modern modes of literary expression, such as the novel and the realistic drama, were non-existent in classical Arabic literature. Thus Tawfik al-Hakim, the famous contemporary Egyptian playwright, found himself compelled to borrow from Ibsen and the French drama.

The art of the theatre did not make its appearance in Arab literature until the nineteenth century. In the days during which the character of Arab culture was being determined, the Arabs borrowed heavily from the Greeks. But the main themes of the Greek drama were of a religious or mythical character, and they had little appeal for the Arabs with their entirely different religious concepts. Thus their budding culture remained untouched by the works of a Sophocles or a Euripides. It was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that a Lebanese, Marum Nakash, established the first Arab theatre. But since Arab plays were non-existent, he had to rely upon foreign plays (mainly by Molière), and he presented them in classical Arabic. The same situation was facing his successor, James Sanuc, who founded the first Arab theatre in Egypt. He, too, had to rely upon foreign plays; but he translated them into a colloquial Egyptian Arabic. This happened in 1870, and ever since then Cairo has remained the centre of Arab theatrical activities. But the dearth of native plays persisted right up to modern times, and the Egyptian theatre had to depend mainly upon foreign imports, ranging from Shakespeare and Corneille to Viennese musical comedies. It is only since the twenties

of the present century that Arab authors themselves have begun to widen their scope by writing for the stage. While some of them have attempted to reach the multitudes by using a modern colloquial idiom, the majority found it hard to liberate themselves from classical Arabic, an Arabic that is comprehensible to the few educated only. Even today the Arab theatre still suffers from the conflict between classicism and modernism, a conflict that is not limited to language alone.

The man who has been instrumental in breaking the ties with the past and bringing literature closer to reality is Taha Hussein, the most celebrated man of letters in Egypt and throughout the modern Arab world. Overcoming the obstacles of total blindness and an early life of poverty, he had taken on the responsibilities of scholar and government servant. It was his belief that a stable and truly independent Egypt would foster conditions favourable for the creation of a new and authentic literature.

One of the major problems facing modern Arab writers is that of bilingualism. It is only in recent years that colloquial Arabic has begun to be accepted as a literary medium. Most books, however, are being written in a modified form of classical Arabic. It must nevertheless be expected that a spread of education and the decline of illiteracy will increasingly diminish the difficulties of language. But it can hardly be expected that Arab writers will put their best into literary productions so long as they believe that problems of nationalism, colonialism and international affairs have a first claim upon their talent and loyalties.

## RECOMMENDED READING

- Gibb, H. A. R.: *Arabic Literature: an Introduction*. London, 1926.  
 Nicholson, R. A.: *A Literary History of the Arabs*. Cambridge, 1930.

# LITERATURE

## CHRONOLOGY OF ARABIC LITERATURE

DATES	AUTHORS	SIGNIFICANCE AND WORKS
d. circa 540	Imru'al-Qays	Author of the first and best known of the <i>Mu'allaqat</i> , the <i>Seven Long Poems</i> , or the <i>Suspended Poems</i> .
651		Koran, first document of prose literature.
c. 640-c. 710	Al-Akhtal (Ghiyath ibn Ghawth)	Satire, panegyric and erotic poetry.
d. 719	Umar ibn Abi Rabi'a	Love poetry. The Don Juan of Mecca; Ovid of the Arabs.
d. c. 729	Jarir (ibn 'Atuyya)	Satire, panegyric and erotic poetry.
c. 640-732	Al-Farazdaq (Hammam ibn Ghalib)	Satire, panegyric and erotic poetry.
d. c. 810	Abu Nuwas	Critic of the traditional school of poetry and leader of the 'new' school. Excelled in satire, panegyric, elegy and love- and wine-songs.
d. 869	Al-Jahiz (Amr ibn Bahr)	<i>Book of Animals</i> .
d. 889	Ibn Qutayba	<i>Accomplishments of the Secretary</i> . <i>Book of Poetry and Poets</i> . <i>Book of General Knowledge</i> .
838-923	Tabari (Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir)	<i>Annals of the Apostles and the Kings</i> .
d. 956	Masudi (Ali ibn Husayn)	<i>Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems</i> .
915-965	Al-Mutanabbi (Abu 'l-Tayyib Ahmad ibn Husayn)	One of the most popular poets. Brilliant use of rhetoric and grandeur of style. A 'Victor Hugo' of the Arabs.
d. 967	Al-Isfahani (Abu 'l-Faraj)	<i>Book of Songs</i> .
d. 995	Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Baghdadi	<i>Fihrist</i> , or <i>Index</i> .
d. 1007	Al-Hamadhani (Badi-u l-Zaman)	<i>Maqamat</i> , or <i>Assemblies</i> .
973-1057	Abu 'l Ala al-Ma'arri	Attacked orthodoxy and the <i>status quo</i> . Poet of rationality and enlightenment.
1054-1122	Al-Hariri (Abu Muhammad al-Qasim)	<i>Maqamat</i> , or <i>Assemblies</i>
1211-1283	Ibn Khallikan (Shamsu l-Din)	<i>Obituaries of Eminent Men</i>
1332-1406	Ibn Khaldun	<i>Book of Examples</i> .
1883-1931	Kahlil Gibran	<i>The Prophet</i> .
1889-	Taha Hussein	<i>An Egyptian Childhood</i> .
1898-	Tawfik al-Hakim	Prominent contemporary Egyptian playwright and novelist.

## CHAPTER 12

### THE ARTS

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THE arts of Islam have produced—choosing haphazardly among the great masters—neither a Phidias nor a Rembrandt, nothing comparable with Michelangelo's David or with Raphael's Madonnas. They have, in brief, given the world no great paintings or noble statues. In the West their arts are even less well known than those of China, Japan and India. We might conclude therefrom that the arts of Islam are of no great consequence; but this is a superficial view, concentrating, as it does, on the plastic arts. Moreover, it may well be that Islam's apparent weakness in the arts is nothing less than a symptom of strength.

The chief instrument for the creative genius of the Arabs has always been language. An Arab proverb says: 'Wisdom has alighted upon three things: the brain of the Franks, the hands of the Chinese and the tongues of the Arabs.' This may well be true. Yet the lack of Arab paintings or sculptures comparable with those of the West is not necessarily due to some specific deficiency or failure of 'wisdom' on the part of the Arabs. It must be attributed to a religious injunction that proscribes representational art. The Prophet Muhammad disdained figurative art. In order to eradicate, once and for all, the idol worship that had been prevalent among the pagan Arabs, he prohibited the making of statues or any images. According to two hadith, he made the following statements: 'Whosoever makes an image him will Allah give as a punishment the task of blowing the breath of life into it; but he is not able to do this', and 'Those who make these pictures will be punished on the Day of Judgment by being told: "Make alive what you have created".'

Since the Muslims were forbidden to indulge in figurative art their artistic gifts had to seek outlets in other directions. In this quest they produced an art which, apart from its other merits or demerits, may

claim to be one of the 'purest' arts known to us. It borrows from neither literature nor religion, from neither history nor the drama, as Western art has done for over two thousand years. It relies solely on the true elements of visual art, namely the exclusively aesthetic ones. Islamic art is not concerned with telling a story, teaching a moral, or competing with the one Creator in an attempt to fabricate 'beings'. Its concern is the manipulation of lines, forms and colours. From exploration of the possibilities of these processes its most distinctive contribution evolved—the arabesque: an exclusively aesthetic, highly concentrated and very logical expression of the artistic spirit. The Muslim artist applied the arabesque to practically every object of daily life, from the ceiling of a mosque and the carpet in a palace to the bowl in a farmer's house, the slippers worn by his wife. The arabesque did not remain the private language of the artist, as does so much in modern abstract art, or the property of the cognoscenti or the rich. It embellished the daily life of every social class. The arabesque gave its distinctive character to Islamic art in Spain as well as in India, in Sicily and Constantinople, and in Arabia and in Asia Minor. Wherever it confronts you, you recognize it instantly for what it is.

At quite an early date, Islamic art acquired a universal rather than a national character. You need not be an expert to recognize at a glance that a Fragonard painting is French, a Titian Italian and a Constable English. But you have to be an expert to tell whether the arabesque on a particular building or piece of pottery originated at Cairo, Cordova or Bukhara. Though individual styles—especially in architecture—developed in Persia, Egypt, the Maghreb and Turkey, what was common to them outweighed their separating features. This joint patrimony was enriched by a constant and many-sided interchange among the various Islamic countries. There was trade that facilitated exchange of wares; there was conscripted labour taken from one part of the vast empire to another; and, finally, there was the shifting of the capital from one place to another, with inevitable accompanying movement of patrons, artists and craftsmen. Out of these exchanges came both the variety and the eclecticism of so much in Muslim art, the mixing of Arab and Persian elements, of Eastern influences, both Chinese and Timurid, with those of Moorish Spain. We find the decorative use of black and white stone so common in

Syria repeated in Spanish Cordova; the designs of Eastern textiles appear in those of Arab Sicily; Chinese motifs and techniques are reflected in Persian pottery and miniatures. Islamic art also shows many non-Muslim influences, exemplified by the Roman arch and column or the Christian nave in a mosque converted from a church.

## I ARCHITECTURE

One of the first things that springs to the eye when we study Islamic architecture is the extraordinary paucity of secular buildings preserved from the past. Even after two world wars Germany can still show many private castles and many private homes of individual burghers that have survived for centuries in Cologne and Hamburg, Nuremberg and Bremen; the houses of long-dead merchants in Florence, Geneva and Amsterdam are still there to impress us with the importance and affluence of their builders. We find next to nothing of this nature in Muslim countries. The world of Islam has hardly anything to compare even with the châteaux of France, the stately homes of England, the palazzi of Italy. Apart from the Alhambra at Granada (which was both palace and fortress) and a few other examples, no specimen of large-scale domestic architecture has survived in the Islamic world.

To understand the situation we have to know something about the spirit in which the Muslims approached the building of a home. Atavism, a nebulous attachment to nomadic thought-and-behaviour patterns, still affected a Muslim's psychological make-up. A nomad's home was a tent pitched temporarily in any place offering pasture for his beasts. Once the pasture (that is the means of existence) was exhausted, the home was transferred to another pasture. So the home was not likely to be considered a monument to a man's position or wealth. It was created for a purely utilitarian purpose and exclusively with regard to the needs of the present. To build a home both for the present and for posterity, as was done by the nobles and the burghers of Europe, implies an urge for personal immortalization. Even today we can admire the wealth, the power and the taste of a Strozzi or Medici in Florence, a John Churchill at Blenheim, a Fugger at Nurem-

berg, since we are able to see the homes they built for themselves centuries ago. In Islam the attitude of these builders for posterity would be regarded as both impious and presumptuous. Man has no right to try to immortalize himself in stone. Immortality belongs to God alone, and veneration after death is the privilege only of those who were closest to Him, namely the saints. There might thus be a legitimate motive for erecting shrines to saints or to kings considered to be God's representatives on earth. Yet even the *qoubbas* or *marabouts*, as saints' tombs are called in eastern and western Islam respectively, are regarded by orthodox Muslims as highly reprehensible.

Altogether the majority of Islam's private dwellings were erected with no thought of permanence, but merely to serve immediate needs. The building material was wont to be of a poor kind, mud or mud and bricks, and rarely solid stone. Once the original builder had died, his heir would either pull the house down or let it disintegrate after salvaging its interior embellishments such as carvings or tiles, to be used in the new house. In some Arab countries, as for example in Morocco, the building of even a private house was regarded as a sort of tribute to God, 'a prayer in stone', as a Moorish writer once put it; and, like prayer, all the better for frequent renewal.

The Arab is a realist who lives in the present. The future lies in the hands of Allah, and the past can look after itself. So, for him, a house represents a reality only so long as it is inhabited and fulfilling its true purpose. Even the most noble ruin from antiquity is meaningless to him, and he considers our Western admiration for, and our attempts at preserving, ruins as childish and sentimental. The only thing of value in a ruin would be, for him, such columns or stones as he could carry away to incorporate in a new house, one that would once again serve the present rather than prolong the past uselessly.

Though gregarious, the Arab makes a fundamental distinction between his public and his private life. Far more tenaciously than the proverbial Englishman, he regards his home as his castle. Hence the anonymous, at times even forbidding, appearance of his house from the outside. In countries of the Near East there might be outside windows, even balconies, but their privacy will be assured by intricate shutters and latticed screens that offer blank prospects to prying eyes. In the Maghreb, the façade will consist of nothing but high blank walls and a sturdy front door. Since the life of the home is centred

on the interior, the house is built round its innermost part, usually in the form of a courtyard or a garden. No inquisitive eyes can penetrate the intimacy of the home. In this the Arab is diametrically opposed to the American who frowns upon surrounding walls, fences or hedges, and whose private home life often supplies a public spectacle at the mercy of the gaze of every passer-by. The addiction to privacy has of course determined the plan of the Arab house, a plan in which the material, proportions and embellishments of the façade count for nothing. The desire for beauty finds its satisfaction within; there it can feast on carved doors and ceilings, mosaics on floors, cool tiles on the walls, a fountain in the centre of the patio, an orange tree and flowers. Since the patio or garden occupies most of the available space, the rooms that surround it will be long and narrow rather than square. There are of course many deviations from this plan—none prevalent, as it is, in the Maghreb than in the East. Likewise, a house in Cairo will differ in many respects from one in Mecca or in Damascus.

Apart from fortresses, the very purpose of which demands solidity, only one type of Islamic edifice is erected not merely for the present but with an eye to permanence and, therefore, of solid materials. This is the mosque. But there is no inconsistency here, for the mosque's purpose is not to accommodate or to glorify a particular individual; it is built to foster and favour the worship of God. Throughout the Muslim world there still exist mosques that are a thousand years old, such as that of Oqba ben Nafi in Kairouan, the Umayyad mosque in Damascus and the mosque of Cordova, all of the eighth century; the seventh-century mosque of the Holy Rock at Jerusalem; Ibn Tulun's ninth-century mosque and the tenth-century al Azhar at Cairo as well as the even earlier Karaouine at Fez.

The original plan of the mosque was of the simplest: a square composed of rows of palm trunks, surrounded by walls of bricks and stone and presumably covered with a flimsy roof of palm branches. Such was the first mosque of Islam, the one at Medina in the construction of which the Prophet is reputed to have lent a hand. In its essential plan it follows that of the Kaaba at Mecca. A cube, developed from the square—and the Kaaba is but a cube—symbolizes the four elements. But Islam is concerned not only with



the four elements of the physical universe: it also incorporates God with His heavens. It must have been some subconscious urge for a symbolic incorporation of the heavens in the house of worship that led the Muslims to adopt (and to perfect) the dome. Cube and dome together might be said to provide a perfect symbol of what Islam is: a unity of the visible and invisible worlds, of earth and heaven.

Though domes were not an Arab invention, the Arabs developed them and varied their shape beyond anything known to their predecessors, making inspired use of the Roman and Byzantine inheritance. Domes became an almost inevitable feature of mosques throughout the Muslim world—in Persia and in Cairo, in Iraq and in Constantinople. Only in the Maghreb has the dome remained a rarity up to the present day. How deeply the Muslims craved a perfect combination of cube and dome, and how strongly their artistic genius must have been predisposed towards its perfection is made evident in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the earliest surviving Muslim monument. Built by the Umayyad Caliph Abdel Malik in 691, that is long before Arab culture was anywhere near reaching its peak, that edifice achieves a balance between octagonal body and dome that has hardly been surpassed in subsequent centuries. As if to show their full mastery in achieving such a balance, its builders have repeated the dome even within the lower rectangular structure of the mosque, enclosing within it a columned and arch-supported rotunda that holds the sacred Rock as though within a precious ring.

The Muslim builders made other extensive borrowings from Roman, Persian or Byzantine models—not only dome but also arches, columns and capitals. Nevertheless they never failed to produce results that are unmistakably Islamic. Both the Umayyads and the Abbasids were wont to import foreign architects and craftsmen, reared on Roman or Byzantine tenets. But the Arab employers invariably succeeded in imparting their specific concepts, so that these builders, making the best of several worlds, produced works that are Islamic and not Roman or Byzantine. In this, as in so many other spheres of Islamic civilization, we find the peculiar Islamic genius at work, a genius that knew how to absorb elements from the most heterogeneous sources in order to transform them into a new and homogeneous synthesis.

Though the nature of the mosque warrants external display (and many mosques show magnificent façades), even in mosques the main accent is placed on interior work, whether in the form of a great nave or a vast rectangular courtyard surrounded by roofed colonnades, such as we see in the Umayyad mosque at Damascus. The splendour of a vast nave together with reminiscences in quarried materials of the original palm trunks of the first Medina mosque is exemplified by the mosque at Cordova with its forest of double-tiered rows of marble columns.

It may be true that the Muslims made no essentially original contributions to architecture. As we have seen, they have taken over the column, the dome and the arch from others. But in their hands all these elements underwent a transformation that gave them a distinctive mark. If the horseshoe arch did exist in Rome, it was only in its Muslim version that it acquired its inevitability and its functional significance. The dome, whether in the ovoid or bulbous shapes of Persia or the stilted one of Cairo, is certainly no longer Roman but distinctly 'oriental', in fact, Muslim. If the minaret derives from early lighthouses, it was the Muslims who gave it its specific character. It was the minaret and not the earlier lighthouse that served as a model for the Christian campanile. One of Christendom's finest church towers, the Giralda at Seville, was originally built as a minaret by the Almohade rulers of Morocco. There are unmistakable traces of the minaret in such famous European towers as those of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence and the Torre del Commune at Verona. We find an echo of the minaret even in the elegant steeples of Wren's city churches in London.

As we see, while the Muslim builders borrowed a great deal from foreign sources, the traffic was not all in one direction. The first users of successive bands of black or red and white stone as a part of architectural décor were the Arabs. We find one of the finest examples of this procedure in the mosque of the Spanish Umayyads at Cordova, and may observe innumerable copies of that arrangement in Western churches, especially those of Tuscany. The cusped arches that appear so frequently in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century churches of France and England owe their origin to such Muslim models as the ninth-century mosque at Samarra. The wide-spanned, pointed arches, usually known as Tudor arches, and to be found at

Christ Church Hall in Oxford (sixteenth century), for example, and other buildings, especially in England, are more than likely to have originated in the 'Persian arch', the springing curve of which joins its supporting column not elliptically but in a straight line.

Late Gothic and Renaissance traceried towers in which bricks are used to form relief-patterns are anticipated in the already mentioned Giralda at Seville and the Kutubia minaret at Marrakesh, both of the twelfth century. Last but not least, mention should be made of the employment of lettering for the decoration of buildings, such as we find so frequently on the façade, the portals and arches of Gothic churches and, later on, on practically every Western college building 'done in the Gothic style'. The origin of such ornamentation must be sought in the Muslim passion for the Arabic script and, hence, for its incorporation in all kinds of decorative schemes. (On the employment of script in Islamic art more will be said in connection with the arabesque.)

The Muslim builders may have produced nothing to equal the Acropolis or the very finest Christian cathedrals; yet the Dome of the Rock, the Alhambra at Granada, and innumerable mosques in Egypt, Persia and Turkey are none the less enduring evidence of a by no means inferior inspiration.

## II THE ARABESQUE

Since the Muslims were precluded from representational painting and sculpture (almost the only entirely non-utilitarian forms of plastic art) their craving for beauty had to find satisfaction in creating objects of daily use. And it is indeed in the minor arts that their creative abilities found their most satisfying expression. Since there was practically no utilitarian object which they deemed unworthy of artistic handling, it is in ordinary domestic items that we see their artistry demonstrated. All the Arab's vision and skill, and his willingness to accept the disciplines imposed by the nature of his material, are visible in the work of potter and weaver as well as in that of the carver and the worker in metal and leather.

While there were individual artists in Islam who designed specific

patterns—usually in the form of arabesques—for carpets, or who produced a unique piece of pottery or glassware and whose names have, by virtue of these objects, come down to us, the bulk of Islamic art is anonymous. Designs and patterns used by generation after generation of artisan developed gradually out of the preliminary experiments and labours of this or that potter or carver who happened also to be a creative artist, but whose name is not on record. In Islam the individual personality of the artist seldom emerges from his work. This accounts for the charge of ‘stereotyping’, often levelled at Islamic art. Here is the essence of the matter. At a comparatively early date, certain forms and patterns developed in the Muslim world, and these were retained in use for hundreds of years, each generation, however, modifying them slightly, adding to them its own refinement and thus transmuting them. But these additions and subtractions were not revolutionary and fundamental; there have been none of the radical changes, the wholesale discardings which have transformed Western art. There was no attempt to adventure beyond the general framework established by tradition. In the arts of Islam we do not find ‘styles’ distinct and opposed the one to the other, such styles, for example, as the Western world’s Romanesque and Gothic, Baroque and Classical, Naturalist and Impressionist.

Islamic art was essentially traditional, anonymous and democratic. It was traditional because religious injunctions imposed upon it from the very beginning certain non-figurative formulae that practically assumed the authority of dogma. It was democratic because, apart from comparatively rare pieces produced for exceptional occasions, the jugs and ewers, the wood carvings and tiles, the copper trays and leather satchels were, for one and all, not merely for the high and mighty but for every man’s use. And it was anonymous because, working within a very definite tradition (as did most of the Byzantine artists), a tradition that expressed the innermost spiritual and aesthetic feelings of the community, the individual artist or artisan was perfectly content to act as transmitter of that tradition.

The essence, almost the symbol, of that tradition was the arabesque: that rather involved arrangement of geometrical forms, stylized plant-elements and lettering that has become the hallmark of Islamic art, and on which so much of Islam’s artistic genius has been expended.

To appreciate the full significance of the arabesque it is best to compare it with Western art as represented by its most typical forms, namely painting and sculpture. Ever since the days of the Greeks Western art concentrated on portraying and, in that process, exalting man. The Greeks pretended to fashion gods, yet all they succeeded in doing was to portray men, however perfect the proportions. The artists of the West who came after them still pretended that they sculpted and painted God, Jesus, the Madonna and angels; in actual fact they, too, glorified the human figure; and in the portraits of their patrons they tried to immortalize even individual men and women.

For the Muslim artist this practice was (with some degree of oversimplification, one must admit) taken to involve deification of man, and therefore idolatry. In the arabesque he was content to use nothing but the intrinsic elements of the visual arts, that is line, form and colour bereft of all literary, psychological or moral significance. Everything that might suggest competition with God, with God's creation of a living universe, was shunned. Thus the arabesque omits not only anything representational but anything that might be interpreted as a wilful creation of reality. So we shall look in vain in it for perspective, shadows and the suggestion of a third dimension. Kept within its exclusively aesthetic confines, the arabesque demands the utmost discipline and concentration and a highly developed aesthetic sense on the part of the artist. It would serve no useful purpose to try to read an overtly symbolic significance into the design of the arabesque or to assess the degree of compromise which the employment (in certain types of arabesque) of stylized plant-elements represents.

The arabesque artist achieved his purely decorative purpose by filling a given surface with an arrangement of lines that coalesced into two-dimensional forms and patterns. Though colour might enter into the arabesque, it was of less importance than lines and forms. Pattern and form free from any literary associations were the arabesque's chief content. But in relying so exclusively upon form and pattern, the arabesque artist made use of what modern science tells us to be the very basis of physical reality. For the older conceptions, according to which matter was the basis of that reality, have been replaced by newer ones maintaining that that basis is provided

by the arrangement, or pattern, of electrons within the atom. Thus pattern or form are said to underlie all visible reality. While the Muslim artist is not likely to have been aware of this fundamental significance of form, it seems worthy of mention that, in his quest for reality—the main incentive of Muslim seekers and scholars—he should have elevated pure form to his one and all. And ‘freedom from literary associations’ was not due to unawareness thereof. If this freedom were not deliberate, it would not be of much consequence; it might even be a flaw.

The concentration on pure form has much to do with the arabesque artist's passionate addiction to the use of lettering. The highly decorative character of the Arabic alphabet, strung together into words, lends itself admirably for the purposes of the arabesque. In fact such lettering forms one of its distinguishing characteristics. The unmistakable love and skill with which these letters were so often painted or carved reveal the depth of feeling with which the Muslim in general and the artist in particular approached the task of converting the word of God into its visible image. (Usually the inscriptions are of a religious nature.) Now the word, or *logos*, whether in Islam, in the Gospel of St John, or in later Christian philosophy, was regarded as God's creative agent. It was God's animating force that breathed life into what previously had been non-existent. The *logos* can thus be equated with the animating principle of life. (It is a new-born child's first breath which confirms that it has acquired life and is not stillborn.) So, as we see, the two elements that form the main contents of the arabesque—pattern and word, ‘shape’ and ‘portent’—signify respectively the principle of physical reality and that of life, in other words, of existence as created by God. It goes without saying that the choice of these two elements was not made deliberately by the Muslim artist. It must have been dictated by his innermost spiritual convictions, both conscious and unconscious. And so the arabesque, without attempting to be a deliberate symbol, intellectually construed, becomes a true symbol of its maker's attitude to God and to the world in which he lives.

Arabesques decorated practically every object fashioned by Muslim artists and craftsmen, from carpets and saddles to window shutters and table tops. Some of the finest arabesques were carved, whether

in plaster, stone or wood. Few things within the domain of Islamic art surpass in ingenuity of design and technical perfection the wooden carvings produced under the Fatimids in Egypt, the ivory caskets of Cordova, or the wood-and-plaster carvings in the Merinide *medersas* at Fez. Particularly popular were small wooden panels used either in doors, chests or ceilings. An arrangement of such panels lent itself admirably for a repetition of a particular design and for compositions stressing symmetry. The artist shared the Muslim thinker's and scientist's passion for order, tabulation and symmetry. As we know, the philosophers sought rational explanations of God's creation of the universe, and were not satisfied unless their explanations showed the logic of perfect symmetry; the mathematicians and astronomers sought what is the most perfect form of symmetry, namely the mathematical equation. In a similar way, the Muslim artist delighted in arrangements of patterns whose predominantly geometrical character lent itself admirably to symmetrical composition.

Many Muslims shared their artists' delight in designing arabesques, for even without the artist's skill they shared his spiritual aspirations. While the best of the arabesques produced by amateurs have the logic and beauty that are wont to emerge whenever a sincere man tries to translate the innermost spirit of his race, religion and civilization into their visible image, there are other arabesques whose deliberately strained complexity does not achieve the requisite organic naturalness, but merely manages to look artificial and laboured.

### III BOOKS

Since lettering plays so important a part in the arabesque, the Muslim carver had to co-operate not merely with the designer but also with the calligrapher. Calligraphy was an honoured calling in Islam, and there were few patrons of the arts or scholars who disdained practising that art. Of the various Muslim rulers who were accomplished calligraphers we only need to mention the famous Saadien Sultan Ahmed al Mansur who maintained such lively relations with Queen Elizabeth of England and who conquered the western Sudan.

Calligraphy and the production of books must be considered as

one of the major among the minor arts of Islam. Almost until modern times Muslim countries have not favoured large-scale mechanical reproduction of literary works, books being written by professional calligraphers (and, in more recent times, reproduced by lithography). Yet though the Muslims did not adopt printing until centuries after Europe, we owe the paper book to the Arabs. For, having learned from the Chinese as far back as in the eighth century how to manufacture paper, soon afterwards they began to produce paper books. Europe was slow in following the Arab example, and did not replace parchment by paper until the fourteenth century. With its paper books Islam passed on to Europe also the embossed leather binding and the flap that protects the front edges of the book.

## IV POTTERY

The predominantly anonymous and democratic character of Islam's minor arts may be responsible for the fact that these arts produced nothing comparable with the work of a Benvenuto Cellini or of the very best in Chinese porcelain. Yet, whether in textiles, pottery or glassware, the general standard of Islam's minor arts is high. This is particularly true in the case of pottery.

The earliest known pieces of Islamic pottery date from the ninth century. Though even at that date Chinese influences are discernible, it is interesting to note that the famous 'Chinese blue' so prevalent in Far Eastern porcelain, was in actual fact of Islamic origin. The Chinese themselves referred to it as 'Muhammadan blue', for the particular ingredients for it, first utilized by the Muslims, were imported by the Chinese from the Middle East. Whenever their imports failed to reach the Chinese potters, they stopped making these popular white-blue wares.

Islamic pottery, mainly Persian, enjoyed great popularity in India. As late as in the seventeenth century, Dutch traders used to export that pottery to Europe, passing it off as Chinese. It was in fact Persian pottery that left the deepest mark upon the popular blue wares of Delft in Holland. Persia was as famous for its stouter ceramics—made of clay of coarser grain—as for its porcelain. The latter, however, did



not reach the finesse of Chinese porcelain, the Persian clay being more porous and lighter than the more vitreous, firmer and more finely grained Kaolin of China. Altogether it would be more correct to speak of Islamic ceramics, pottery or faience than porcelain. The only Persian ceramics that might claim to be porcelain are certain white, almost translucent pieces in which the attempt was made to equal Chinese models; such pieces, incidentally, are extremely rare.

Islamic pottery reached its apogee in its lustred products, that is in articles in which the design was painted in metallic salt on a glazed surface, fixed finally by firing in smoke. As a result of that process the pottery would acquire an iridescent silver-blue, green-yellow or copper-red gleam. Whether this method was in use first in Persia, Egypt or the Maghreb we do not know for certain, for in all these parts of the Muslim world specimens have been preserved whose quality has not been surpassed elsewhere. Apart from the lustre pottery of Persia, the finest specimens were produced in Valencia under the Moors. These were most highly prized in Italy, where they were avidly copied.

One of the features which distinguished Islamic ceramics from those of China is that while so much of the latter was made for display, those of Islam were made, by and large, for daily use. They were not meant to be something outside of daily life, something merely for the connoisseur, but had to serve practical purposes. Finer and more expensive pieces were, of course, being made besides the cruder ones; yet neither were treated as mere show-pieces, and even the cheaper wares maintained a remarkably high standard, thus indicating a corresponding standard of taste on the part of the people who bought them. For had their customers been content with shoddy articles, the potters would undoubtedly have been found to provide these.

An important branch of Islamic ceramics was the manufacture of the glazed tiles which to the present day form a marked feature of Muslim décor. Such tiles were equally popular in Persia and the Maghreb, in Syria and Iraq. They might cover the façade of a mosque, the wall of a room or the floor of a patio. Particularly handsome were the now very rare tiles with a metallic lustre which appear to have originated in Persia.

The articles produced by the Muslim glass-makers vied with those

of the potters. Syria particularly excelled in this type of work. It was much coveted in Europe where the elaborate Syrian beakers, lamps and bottles covered with coloured *repoussé* work and enamel found an eager market. Though from the fifteenth century onwards European artisans, especially in Venice, tried to copy these Syrian models, they never achieved the same beauty of design or perfection of craftsmanship. Some of the best examples of Islamic glassware are to be found among mosque lamps or, rather, containers in which nestles a small oil-vessel with a wick. Their makers lavished upon these utilitarian objects all their skill and gave full play to their taste for rich décor. Usually these lamps are covered with many-coloured arabesques, ornate bands and even involved patterns of flowers.

#### V TEXTILES, METAL AND LEATHER

The Arab as well as the Persian is essentially a sensuous person with an eager response to the texture and the 'feel' of an object. The varied glazes of their ceramics satisfied both the tactile sense of their Muslim owners and their desire for the sensation of coolness. Likewise, the relief surface of a carved arabesque provided satisfaction and excitement to the fingers gliding over it. The texture of that surface, moreover, differed from article to article, for the carving might be done in alabaster or stone, wood or plaster, or even rock crystal.

In view of the delight that Muslims took in the texture of things that added pleasure to their lives it is not surprising that they should have produced textiles of great variety. True enough, the Muslims were not their originators. Pre-Islamic Syria, nearby Byzantium and Persia had produced fine textiles before the Arabs appeared on the cultural scene. Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad had looked with scorn upon silken garments. But their rapidly growing appreciation of beautiful things soon made the Muslims forget this minor prohibition imposed upon them by a master whom in most other respects they never tired of emulating. In fact they became the leading silk-mercers of the medieval world, and they were inventors of a number of fabrics whose very names proclaim to this day their place of origin.

The best known among these are damask (Damascus); muslin, which, under the name of *mussolina*, was imported by Italian merchants from Mosul; fustian, which came from Fustat, the first Islamic capital of Egypt, and which was very popular in medieval Europe; or taffeta, which originated in Persia under the name *taftah*. A large proportion of Islamic textiles were made for export, the nobility of most European countries being only too willing to pay the highest prices for Muslim silks and brocades. Gradually this demand became so great that Europe began to install its own looms on which the Eastern wares were copied. One of the most renowned weaving houses of Europe was that at Palermo in Sicily, established at the royal palace and run by Arab experts. It was from them that, under the Normans, Italian workmen learned their craft; and it was from Palermo that silk weaving later spread to other cities of Italy, to become one of the country's leading industries.

The traditional designs of Muslim silk weavers consisted mainly of arabesque-like arrangements of formalized flowers and fruit, often interspersed with bands of decorative lettering. Gradually, however, human motifs came into use, especially in Persian fabrics. Many a chasuble or other church vestment used in the cathedrals of Europe was covered with highly sophisticated designs in which the stylized figures of oriental youths in very secular poses were pursuing some unecclesiastical activity. Islamic fabrics appear even in the religious paintings of Christian artists, such as Giotto and Fra Angelico. Thus the Madonna or some Christian saint might be wearing a vestment whose embroidered inscriptions praise the only Allah and his Prophet Muhammad. Particularly famous is Fra Lippo Lippi's beautiful *Coronation of the Virgin* at the Uffizzi Gallery in Florence, in which the angels hold yard-long transparent ribbons covered with Arabic inscriptions.

The high quality achieved by Arab weavers was maintained by their Turkish successors within the Ottoman Empire, whose silken wares competed even in the eighteenth century on the European market with those of the Italian manufacturers.

The exacting standards of Arab craftsmanship were reflected in metalwork, whether in copper, brass, silver or steel. The flexible steel of Damascus in the east and Toledo in the west produced the famous swords and rapiers known by the names of the cities in which they

originated. Damascene steel inlaid with geometrical or floral motifs in gold, silver or baser metals retained its renown for many centuries. Engraved, arabesque-covered brasswork in the shape of trays, table-tops, ewers, coffee-pots, pitchers and basins has been produced through the Middle East and the Maghreb even to the present day. Muslim metalwork reached its perfection in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially at Mosul, famous for its gold and silver inlaid ewers, salvers and jewel-cases. Particularly popular were small writing-cases fitted with partitions for reed pens, ink-wells, paste and sand, and highly decorated both on the outside and the inside. Today some of these cases are the pride of museums in Europe and America.

One of the Islamic arts best known beyond the confines of Islam is leatherwork. In this field, pride of place goes to Morocco where, at quite an early date, methods were developed for tanning hides to the softness almost of silk and of dyeing the leather with vegetable dyes whose tints were practically indestructible. Even today we call finest quality leather for bookbinding or other luxury articles 'morocco'. Though such leather articles as hassocks, wallets, slippers, purses and so on produced in the Maghreb and in other Arab countries have always been popular with Western buyers, they have left very little mark upon corresponding articles produced in Europe. Islamic bookbinding, however, with its gold tooling, its coloured panels sunk into the leather and its protecting flaps was much imitated in the West, especially at Venice.

## VI MINIATURES

Of all the Muslim arts the one best known and most admired in the Western world is that of the Persian miniature. Together with Moghul paintings in India, the Persian miniature represents a transgression against the Islamic prohibition of figurative art. By the time Islam reached the Persians these were already cultured and highly sophisticated, and had developed their own art forms. While they became devout Muslims—in fact some of the greatest religious thinkers and best known Sufis were Persian—they were on the whole

of a far more sceptical and intellectual cast of mind than the Arabs. The very circumstance of their adopting the Shi'ite version of Islam rather than the orthodox Sunni is an indication of their religious individualism. Intellectually refined and of a lively aesthetic sensitivity, they would not accept trammelling proscriptions that might hinder their pursuit of beauty. Thus to fill a miniature with human figures, trees, flowers and animals was, for them, not so much a transgression against religious commands as an acknowledgment of, and a tribute paid to, life in some of its most alluring aspects. As Shi'ites, the Persians took the religious prohibition against graven images far more lightly than did the Sunnis.

Even the Persian miniature cannot always be regarded as an example of representational art in the Western sense of the term. On the whole, the miniaturist did not share the ambition of the contemporary Western artist to 'compete with God', in trying to recreate living beings. His aim was a more strictly aesthetic one. He painted man not so much in the role of *homo sapiens* as in that of one of many elements in a decorative scheme. In his hands man was neither more important nor less so than a staircase, a flower, a cloud or a vase. What mattered most about him was his usefulness, in shape and colour, as part of a general decorative arrangement involving other shapes and colours. His 'non-representative' character was moreover emphasized by the absence of perspective, the Persian miniature being essentially as two-dimensional as is the arabesque.

One of the decisive elements that gives Western paintings their 'realism' is the use of perspective and shadows. For it is only thanks to these that their figures appear three-dimensional. Shadows and perspective likewise introduce the illusion of distance. And our awareness of distance instantly also awakens our awareness of time, that is, the time that it would take to traverse that pictured distance. Bereft of perspective, of the third dimension, and evoking no sense of time, most Persian miniatures can hardly be regarded as attempts to re-create life in a faithful representation, in the way of a Vermeer or an Impressionist painter. Thus the miniature uses the visual elements of life for predominantly aesthetic purposes. While Western art emphasizes the importance, almost the divinity, of man by so often depicting him on a monumental scale, in the Persian miniature man is reduced to an almost microscopic size. There were, of course,

many exceptions, and there were miniaturists who excelled in the painting of 'realistic' portraits, disdaining neither shadows nor perspective. But apart from reflecting foreign influences, such work is far less typical of the entire genre than are the miniatures of a more strictly aesthetic nature, with stylized humanity.

Though Islamic miniature painting came into existence under the Abbasids in Baghdad, nothing of that period has survived, and the earliest existing examples date from the thirteenth century. These paintings, however, are Arab rather than Persian, and they show unmistakable Hellenistic influences. After the destruction of Baghdad and its civilization by the Mongols in 1258, the centre of Islamic painting moved to northern Persia, where the Mongol conquerors established their capital. The art of the Persian miniature (and illustration) can thus be said to have been born at the end of the thirteenth century. From then on, the earlier Hellenistic and Byzantine influences were replaced by Asian and particularly Chinese ones. The second Mongol conquest, under Timur in the fourteenth century, brought Persia, together with Syria and Mesopotamia, into the Mongol empire whose capital was first at Samarqand, and then at Herat. By that time, Chinese influences were firmly entrenched in Persian miniature painting. We find evidence of it in floating clouds, a specific rhythmic quality of flowing figures and garments, the frequent appearance of animals and birds (especially flying ducks), more subdued colours and a more calligraphic quality in the general line-work.

One of the subjects most popular with the miniaturists was Firdausi's great epic *Shahnama*. Among Persia's finest miniatures are those illustrating scenes from that epos. Miniature painting reached its zenith in the sixteenth century in the hands of Kamalludin Behzad, and maintained its high quality until the early eighteenth century, from which point it began to decline.

There were cases when even Arab artists transgressed against their religion's dictum that 'living' forms must not be delineated. Thus the Umayyads had their hunting lodge at Qusayr Amrah decorated with frescoes of nudes, allegorical figures and hunting scenes. However, we know that religion sat only lightly on Umayyad shoulders; moreover, we have reason to believe that the actual painters of those

frescoes were not Muslim but Christian artists. By and large, the human figures produced by them are as rare in Arab art as are the lions surrounding the famous fountain in one of the courtyards of the Alhambra at Granada.

More common were representational motifs on Syrian and Egyptian pottery and textiles. We may find among these the outlines of a singer, a dancer, an instrument player or a prince treating himself to a cup of wine. These figures are usually painted not naturalistically but two-dimensionally, suggesting calligraphy as much as representation.

If, apart from the Persian miniature, we wished to find parallels between Islamic figurative art and that of Europe, we would be likely to discover them in the art of the Byzantines rather than in that farther west. For the Byzantine artist, too, conceived his figures two-dimensionally rather than in depth, and he, too, disdained the use of shadows and perspective, and took no thought for peculiarities of individuals.

## VII CARPETS

The Persians were ardent lovers of flowers and gardens. Their walled-in garden, isolated as much as possible from the surrounding world with its strains and stresses and its relentless passage of time, was meant to be as much as possible a haven of permanent bliss, and an attempt would ever be made to have growing things within it throughout the twelve months of the year. It was in fact called *firdaus* (from *pairi*, 'around', and *diz*, 'to form or mould', in other words, an 'enclosed garden'), from which our English word 'paradise' derives. Though the Arabs did not call their enclosed patio-gardens by the same name, they, too, tried to establish in them the calm and beatitude associated with coolness, the sound of water and, above all, a vegetation offering greenery and flowers at every season of the year.

The Persians succeeded in preserving their private little paradise, even indoors, and this they did by making a garden of the carpet. The carpet's arrangement of stylized flowers and flower-borders is but a formalized representation of the actual garden outside. But this indoor 'garden' is immune from inclement weather and the

change of the seasons, and thus little scathed by the passage of time. As we already know, the element of time is absent from the arabesque, and the Muslim dwelling-house is so planned as to foster the idea of timelessness. And the mosque, built for permanence, symbolizes not so much a perpetuation of time as the element of eternity (timelessness) that man can experience only in his intercourse with, or in the presence of, God. Significantly, the other most common motif used in the Persian carpet is the *mihrab*, that is the niche in a mosque wall that indicates the direction of Mecca, and the lamp suspended in the mosque—both symbols of that eternity experienced only through communion with the Deity.

It seems almost inevitable that the carpet should have originated where it did. Modern scholarship has established that carpets, as we usually understand them, that is, pile-carpets hand-made on a loom from threads of wool (or silk) held by a knot in the supporting warp of some sort of canvas, existed before the Christian era. We have good reason to believe that such carpets were being manufactured between the third and sixth centuries A.D. in Chinese Turkestan, on the fringe of what was to become the Arab world and, again, in the eleventh century, by the Seljuks in Anatolia, and the Moors in Spain and, in the twelfth century, in Persia and the Caucasus.

In Europe, where Eastern pile-carpets are not likely to have been known until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they remained for a long time articles of luxury. In the Orient from the very beginning they were articles of daily use, and either replaced beds or were used as hangings on the walls or as floor-covers. In that last function they represented an advance upon the skins of beasts that covered the ground in a nomad's tent or in his primitive dwelling. Since the sheep of Persia provided a high-quality wool, it was only natural that floor-coverings made of that wool should gradually replace the cruder skins associated with a more primitive stage in Persian history.

The carpet has always been a much more intimate possession of its Muslim owner than is fully comprehensible in the Western world. To many a man in Persia or Syria, Iraq or Lybia, the carpet has status as his most treasured possession. Apart from its material and aesthetic value it can symbolize the garden, the mosque, even paradise. And it prevents the *jinn*, those invisible mischievous genii who like nestling on the ground, from invading the room. No true Muslim would



dream of walking upon his carpets with his shoes on. This applies also to the smaller versions of rugs made specially for the purpose of prayer. The tiny prayer mats carried by their owner to the mosque, though occasionally real carpets, were normally made of lighter and less elaborate stuff.

Though fine carpets were woven in Persia for centuries, it was in the sixteenth century that they reached their peak of perfection. Turkish carpets, though good enough to compete with those of Persia and even to be mistaken for these, were seldom of quite the same high level. (Incidentally, the surest way to tell a Persian carpet from a Turkish is to ascertain the manner in which each individual strand of wool is fastened to the warp.)

The wool or silk used for the making of Persian carpets being more or less of identical kind, their quality depends upon their firmness, that is, the closeness of the individual threads. While a carpet of excellent quality may have, say 15 by 20 knots to the inch, or 300 knots per square inch, some of the famous carpets preserved in Western museums are of even finer quality. Thus the sixteenth-century Chelsea Carpet of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London has 21 by 22 knots to the inch, and the even more famous Hunting Carpet in Vienna has 29 by 27 knots to the inch, that is 783 knots per square inch! Most of these magnificent carpets were made under the Safavid dynasty.

The design of most Persian carpets consisted primarily of geometrical and flower motifs or of the mihrab and the mosque lamp. But some of the finest carpets—such as, for example, the just-mentioned Hunting Carpet—also show animals and human figures, or trees, clouds and many of the other objects beloved by Persian miniaturists. It was, in fact, the art of the illuminator—whether as miniaturist or book illustrator—that influenced carpet designs. Such carpets, however, must be regarded as unorthodox in the purely Islamic sense. As a matter of fact many of them were likely to be manufactured in Turkestan, Anatolia and the Caucasus—all three famous for their carpets—rather than in Persia.

Carpets are being made in Persia to the present day. To the exquisite traditional designs have been added many modern ones which,

however, indicate a sad deterioration of taste. Western influences bear the chief responsibility for this, as is the case throughout the Muslim world wherever alien artistic concepts are replacing the indigenous ones, rooted so deeply in the spiritual and cultural traditions of the Muslim peoples. This applies not only to the making of carpets but to other arts as well.

The impact of the West and of modernism is of a comparatively recent date in Islam. Muslim artists from Pakistan and Egypt to Morocco are now painting in the 'Western' style. Muslim sculptors are producing portrait busts, nudes and other figurative statues. The more gifted among them have absorbed the Western mood with ease, and have produced some works of merit. Yet, in comparison with the work of their best Western colleagues, their own is of minor significance. Of course we must not expect the artists of Islam to be for ever content to repeat the patterns created by their predecessors. Their urge for new and original forms of expression is but a proof of their vitality, and the East-West interchange of ideas is as inevitable in this sphere as in any other. But this is the moment of first impact, the season of trial, rejection, conditional acceptance. Integration obviously cannot be complete for many years to come, and this process of allying new concepts and techniques with inherited notions and skills is bound to be protracted. This fusion will not be confined to art, of course. It represents the main problem that faces the modern Arab world in practically all its activities.

#### RECOMMENDED READING

- Arnold, T. W. (ed.): *Legacy of Islam*. Oxford, 1931.  
 Landau, Rom: *The Arabesque*. San Francisco, 1955.  
 Rivoira, G. T.: *Moslem Architecture*. Oxford, 1918.

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE ARTS

Chief characteristics: no representational art; next to no painting or sculpture. Most prevalent feature: the arabesque.

Most typical elements: the minaret, the dome, the horseshoe arch, decorative use of lettering, stalactite ornament.

Main contributions: in architecture, pottery, textiles, metal- and leatherwork, bas-relief carving; in Persia: miniatures and carpets.

*Architecture*

Strongly influenced by Roman, Byzantine and Persian architecture; but all foreign elements transformed into unmistakably Islamic versions. Best-known features are cusped arches, saw-tooth battlements, traceried towers, use of different-coloured stone, bulbous domes, bands of carved lettering, use of tiles, overall wealth of ornamentation.

Outstanding examples: mosques of Oqba ben Nafi (Kairouan), Umayyad (Damascus), 'la Mezquita' (Cordova), all of the eighth century, Dome of the Rock (Jerusalem), seventh century, Ibn Tulun mosque at Cairo, ninth century, Giralda (Seville) and Kutubia (Marrakesh) minarets, twelfth century, the Alhambra (Granada), thirteenth century, the Sultan Ahmed mosque (Istanbul), seventeenth century.

*Impact on the West*

Influences of Islamic architecture are found in European campaniles, Tudor arches, saw-tooth battlements (Venice), decorative use of stone lettering, various features in fortified castles, striped (many coloured) façades (Florence).

*Pottery and Glass*

Muslims never produced porcelain as fine as that of China, but their ceramics and tiles were second to none. Their outstanding contribution was lustre-ware from Persia and Moorish Spain. Equally high standards were achieved in glassware, especially in Syria.

Muslim pottery was very popular in Europe. So was glassware, which was much copied in Italy.

*Textiles*

Muslims were leading silk-mercers. Originated damask, muslin, fustian, taffeta. Patterns were abstract or formalized flowers, occasionally figurative.

Princes and churches of Europe were avid buyers of Muslim textiles which were much copied in Italy. Muslim fabrics often appear in religious paintings of European artists.

## *Metalwork*

Damascus and Toledo produced the finest steel for swords and blades. Most Muslim countries produced articles of chiselled silver, brass or copper; also of metal inlaid with enamel.

## *Leatherwork*

The Moroccans were among the first to perfect the arts of tanning and dyeing leather. High-quality leather is still called 'morocco'. Articles of embossed or embroidered leather—hassocks, satchels, slippers—are being produced in most Arab countries.

## *Painting*

Representational painting was seldom practised in Islam, though there were exceptions. Figurative painting was common in miniatures, especially in Persia. Persian miniatures reached their peak under the Timurids in the fifteenth century and under Shah Tahmasp in the sixteenth century.

## *Carpets*

Pile-carpets first appeared in the Muslim world in Moorish Spain and Anatolia in the eleventh century and, in Persia, in the twelfth century. The finest were produced in Persia, where they reached their peak of perfection in the sixteenth century. Though there exist carpets with figurative designs, the designs of most consist of geometrical or stylized flower motifs. While the main centres of carpet-making are Persia and Turkey, carpet industries exist in other Muslim countries, particularly popular being the plain-patterned, thick-wool carpets of Morocco.

## *Impact on the West*

Muslim metal wares are popular in the West to the present day.

Early European bookbinding was much influenced by the tooled and embossed leather bindings of Islam.

Western art is little influenced by Islamic painting. But Islamic subjects—types, costume, lettering—were very popular with European painters, from the early Renaissance until Rembrandt. Persian miniatures have always been much sought after by Western collectors.

Eastern pile-carpets did not reach Europe until the end of the fourteenth century. For a long time they remained there articles of mere luxury. Though the West tried to copy Muslim carpets, it never succeeded in competing with them either in quality, design or colour.

## CHAPTER 13

### PROBLEMS OF THE PRESENT ARAB WORLD

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#### I THE MODERN ARAB WORLD

THE problems of the modern Arab world can be understood only in the light of its past history and in relation to the complications of our modern world. Though this is, of course, a truism universally applicable, the statement needs to be emphasized when we are considering the case of the Arabs, whose fate has come to symbolize two of the most pressing problems of our times, namely the emergence of once dependant peoples from colonialism to national sovereignty and the conflict between the ideologies of Communism and the West. In the Arab countries no solution of either of these problems can be sought without reference to the Arabs' own past.

When at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Ottomans conquered the entire Near East, the Arabs practically disappeared from the political and cultural scene. Islam assumed a predominantly Turkish complexion and the Arabs became a colonized people. Power, leadership, wealth, educational and cultural opportunities became the monopoly of the Turks. Between the sixteenth and the twentieth centuries the rest of the world seldom spoke of 'Muslims' or 'Arabs': it used 'Turks' as generic term, inaccurately but almost universally, for Turkish beys and deys ruled in Algeria and Tunisia; Turkish governors occupied the seat of power in Mecca and Baghdad, Jerusalem and Damascus. The Arab was left with few opportunities for practising whatever gifts of leadership he might possess, for cultivating and developing his language, for perpetuating his past civilization. Indeed the deepest scar left upon him was that resulting from his enforced and almost complete cultural isolation. Cut off within the rigid confines of Ottoman seclusion and intolerance, he was prevented from participating in the intellectual and scientific advances

of the Western world. Such education as was open to him was dispensed chiefly by obscurantist scribes and mullahs concerned with their own privileges, and unswerving in their own very narrow interpretation of Sunni orthodoxy. By the time the twentieth century dawned the Arab was completely ignorant of the tremendous progress made by the Western world in practically every domain of learning. He was hardly aware of the coming of the Renaissance, of the age of enlightenment or of the industrial revolution. At the same time most of the memories of his own cultural past had been eradicated from his mind. The voices of a few individual reformers, such as Afghani, in the middle of the nineteenth century, and of Muhammad Abdu, some years later, reached the ears of but a tiny minority of Muslim intellectuals. The great Arab masses remained within the mental darkness that had engulfed them for four centuries. The discoveries of Galileo and Descartes, the advance of Western humanism and political democracy, the stupendous discoveries of European and American science, all these remained *terra incognita* to the Arabs.

The few breaches in the wall of Ottoman isolation and obscurantism made by certain events in the nineteenth-century Lebanon and Egypt did not admit sufficient light to awaken the majority of the Arabs from their intellectual stupor. With the downfall of the Ottomans after World War I, the attainment of Arab sovereignty and independence became possible. In actual fact the Ottoman type of colonialism was replaced by a new type of foreign rule, namely that of Western colonialism. Though between the two world wars Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia attained full or partial independence, other lands, such as Syria, the Lebanon, Palestine, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, continued to live as an under-privileged majority ruled by a foreign minority, whether French, British or Italian. Even when, by the mid-fifties of the present century, most of the Arab countries had attained their sovereignty, the French continued to exercise a military and economic control in North Africa that robbed the nominal political independence of these countries of most of its substance.

While it would not be true to say that Western colonialism in the Near East had left behind nothing of value, it is nevertheless a fact that the Arabs retained a sense of grievance rather than a feeling of gratitude. In most cases the Western Powers granted their Arab charges their independence only grudgingly and usually at the price

of much suffering and an unnecessary shedding of blood. As a result, the Arabs were wont to dismiss out of hand the positive legacy of colonialism and to dwell only on what they considered harmful in that bequest. To understand the trend of modern Arab thinking and of Arab policies we must try to view the relevant problems not from our own Western point of view but from that of the Arabs themselves. For it is ultimately their point of view and not ours—however erroneous and prejudiced the former might appear to us to be—that decides their attitude towards the world and their decision to prefer one set of ideas to another.

The root of Arab grievances is embedded in the record of French and British policies during, and after, World War I, that is, at a moment when, with the lifting of the Ottoman yoke from their shoulders, the Arabs were looking hopefully towards attainment of complete independence. It is open to question whether that Franco-British record entitles the Western Powers to accuse the Arabs of ingratitude and to condemn them for their anti-Western attitudes. Yet it cannot be denied that by the fifties of the present century the Arabs were strongly anti-colonialist and therefore almost automatically anti-West. The focal point for those sentiments was provided by the new state of Israel, regarded by the Arabs as an exclusively Western creation. The anti-Israel and anti-colonial attitude of the Arabs completely overshadowed problems which, in actual fact, were of far greater moment to them, such as that of the conflict between Islamic tradition and the impact of modern social and technological ideas, or between the backward rural populations and the more sophisticated inhabitants of the cities; the problems of the big land-owner and the inevitable accompaniment of poverty and social injustice, and, finally, that of the clash between spiritual and secular concepts within the Arab world itself. These very pressing problems were further aggravated by the lack of a strong and clearly defined middle class that might bridge the gulf between the vast population of ignorant and under-privileged and the small group of people of wealth and power.

There was no dearth of leaders who were conscious of these various major difficulties and who were attempting to solve them. Unfortunately again and again their good intentions and their energies were

certain to be deflected from their true aim by an almost pathological fear of colonialism. In consequence, such momentous landmarks as the 1952 revolution in Egypt and the social and agricultural reforms to which it gave birth, the establishment of the Development Corporation in Iraq, the modernization of Kuwait, the profound democratization of the newly independent states in Morocco and Tunisia were completely overshadowed by such unfruitful clashes as the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, the Algerian war against the French, the Israeli-British-French attack on Egypt in 1956, and Egypt's conflict with the West over the Suez Canal. Few of these doleful events would have been likely to occur had it not been for what the Arabs regarded as their betrayal by the West after World War I. Without some knowledge of the 'betrayal', it is impossible to understand the subsequent deterioration in the relations between the Arab world and the West.

## II THE GREAT 'BETRAYAL'

Arab nationalism is not a new phenomenon. As early as in the second half of the nineteenth century, a number of Arab intellectuals and officers (in the Ottoman army), especially in Syria, made Arab independence their objective. At first their ambitions were focused mainly on political reform internally and some measure of autonomy within the Ottoman empire. But when the 1908 revolution of the Young Turks, whom they considered as their natural allies, left them in their old condition of an under-privileged group, they began to contemplate their future in terms of complete independence from the Ottoman thralldom.

The great moment for Arab nationalism came with the outbreak of World War I when Britain and France found themselves fighting Turkey as Germany's ally. For the Western Allies, and especially for Britain, it was essential to prevent the Turks and the Germans from descending south from Turkish-held Syria into Egypt and gaining control of the Suez Canal. For Britain, with her vast colonial Muslim population, especially in her Indian empire, it was equally essential that the Turkish war against her should not assume the character of a *jihad*, or Holy War. For in that case Muslims through-



out the world—including the twenty million of North Africa—would automatically support her Turkish (and German) enemies. However, the Ottoman sultan's proclamation of a *jihad* would be lacking full authority so long as it was not sanctioned by the one person whom most Muslims regarded as the true custodian of Islamic orthodoxy. That man was the Sharif Hussein, spiritual head of Mecca and Medina, and thus guardian of Islam's holiest places. As a member of the Hashimite family, he was, moreover, a direct descendant of the Prophet's family. The sultan at Constantinople, though neither a sharif nor an Arab but a Turk, had taken over from his predecessors the title of caliph. Quite apart from political considerations, pious Muslims regarded him as something of a usurper. Hussein, on the other hand, symbolized the purity of both Islam and Arabism. If he could be persuaded by the British to dissociate himself from the Ottomans, refuse to sanction the proclamation of a *jihad*, and lend support to the Western Allies, the war effort of the Turks might be gravely impeded.

Quite early in the war Lord Kitchener, who had only just exchanged his position of British Agent in Egypt for that of Secretary for War in England, approached Hussein through intermediaries in order to discover whether the sharif would side with Turkey or join Great Britain. For Hussein two courses lay open: either to stand by Turkey and earn her gratitude, or to rise against her and seek Arab independence through warfare. Mistrustful of Allied designs in the Near East, Hussein despatched a non-committal reply which incited Kitchener to send a telegram in which he made definite promises concerning Hussein's own future and general promises to support the Arabs in their endeavours to secure their independence. However vague these terms, they referred unmistakably to the 'Arab Nation', and to the sharif they conveyed a clear invitation to prepare an anti-Turkish revolt of all the Arabs. The negotiations that ensued are known as the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, and they form the essential basis for everything that has happened since in the relations between the Arabs and the West.

On the British side the chief protagonist in these fateful negotiations was Sir Henry McMahon, Kitchener's successor in Egypt with the title of High Commissioner. On the Arab side the protagonists were the Sharif Hussein and his two sons Abdallah and Feisal. It was

these three, or, rather, Hussein who negotiated with Great Britain in the name of all Arab patriots. Though most of these were only too eager to free their Arab lands from the Ottoman rule, they put little trust in the Western Powers, especially in France, whose designs on Syria were only too well known to them. Thus it required a great deal of time, patience and labour on the part of the three Hashemites to persuade their fellows to make common cause with the British. The one British guarantee they might be willing to accept was Kitchener's underwriting of the promises, for the name of Kitchener was renowned and respected in the Muslim world, and he was probably the only Englishman at the time whose word would be accepted by the Arabs.

By the summer of 1915 the ruler of Mecca had succeeded in winning over the chief Arab nationalists, whereupon he despatched the first of the crucial letters to Sir Henry McMahon. At that moment, more than at any stage of the war, Turkey's hold on Syria and Iraq represented a threat both to the Suez Canal and to the head of the Persian Gulf with its valuable oilfields operated by the Anglo-Persian Company. Farther south, the Turkish army stationed in the Yemen was a threat to the British colony of Aden and to Britain's sea-traffic through the Red Sea. Thus the Arab support, personified as it then was by the Sharif Hussein, became a vital element in Allied planning. Though at that moment Britain had not yet given Hussein clear and definite promises, the sharif refused to endorse the Ottoman sultan's call to the *jihād*, thus provoking a passionate antagonism on the part of the Turks and, at the same time, rendering the Allies an immeasurably important service.

Meanwhile, that is from July 14, 1915, until January 30, 1916, Hussein and McMahon exchanged letters, in which both parties made clear their reciprocal demands and promises. Apart from specific details, Sir Henry declared in his letters that the 'Government of Great Britain are prepared to give all the guarantees and assistance in their power to the Arab Kingdom', and in his letter of October 24, 1915, he stated that, 'Subject to the modifications stated above, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca'. He also stated that 'the Government of Great Britain . . . does not intend to conclude any peace whatsoever, of

which the freedom of the Arab peoples and their liberation from German and Turkish domination do not form an essential condition'.

Hussein and his followers regarded the British declarations as definite promises of a fully independent Arab kingdom that would include most of the Arab lands under Ottoman domination with a few specific omissions to which Hussein had agreed.

A few months after the conclusion of the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, Britain, France and Russia signed a secret treaty, known as the Sykes-Picot agreement (April-May 1916). In this agreement many of the promises given to Hussein were disregarded by the big powers. While prepared to recognize 'an independent Arab state or a confederation of Arab states', the three powers were guaranteeing one another certain rights in areas that the McMahon correspondence had either explicitly or implicitly promised to the Arabs. Later, in November 1917, the British government made public the famous Balfour Declaration that promised the Jews a 'national home' in Palestine, a Palestine that was to have formed a part of the new Arab kingdom.

The Turkish government, having obtained the text of the Sykes-Picot agreement, found a way of bringing this to Hussein's notice. A startled Hussein requested the British government to furnish an explanation. On February 8, 1918, His Majesty's Government tried to set his mind at rest by informing him that 'The Turkish policy is to create dissension by luring the Arabs into believing that the Allied Powers have designs on the Arab countries. . . . His Majesty's Government reaffirm their former pledge in regard to the liberation of the Arab peoples, etc.'

As events were to prove, this reaffirmation of earlier pledges did not tally with intention. In spite of Britain's assurances, Hussein and his followers had seen the red light, and before long seven leading Arab nationalists in Cairo made a *démarche* in London requesting an elucidation of Great Britain's position. Britain's official reply was transmitted to them on June 16, 1918. In it the British government not merely reaffirmed earlier promises to Hussein and the Arabs, but placed an added emphasis upon them.

'His Majesty's Government recognize', the note stated, 'the complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs inhabiting these

territories', that is, those 'which were free and independent before the outbreak of the war, and territories liberated from Turkish rule by the actions of the Arabs themselves.' As for the territories 'occupied by the Allied armies', the British government declared that 'the future government of those territories should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed', that is, of the Arabs. In so far as Arab lands that were 'still under Turkish rule' were concerned, His Majesty's Government declared that its desire was 'that the oppressed peoples in those territories should obtain their freedom and independence. His Majesty's Government will continue to work for the achievement of that object.'

As can be seen, the British government not merely acknowledged the right of the Arabs to complete independence in the lands inhabited by them, and previously under Turkish rule (naturally including Palestine, with over 90 per cent of the population Arab), but also gave the pledge that no regime would be set up in any of the Arab lands that was not acceptable to the population.

The declaration to the Seven was received throughout the Arab world with boundless enthusiasm, for did it not contain an unequivocal summing-up of all Allied pledges, a summing-up which in the clarity of its language went far beyond the ambiguities of the McMahon correspondence? Moreover, a few weeks after that declaration had been made, on July 4, 1918, President Wilson made his famous speech at Mount Vernon in which he announced his Fourteen Points, the second of which upheld the principle of the declaration, namely that the post-war settlements would be based on the 'free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned'. A new wave of optimism swept through the Arab ranks that were then engaged upon the legendary 'War in the Desert', side by side with their British allies, a war that was made famous by T. E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, a war in the course of which the Turks were being squeezed out of the Arabian Peninsula, Syria and Palestine.

The final Allied promises to the Arabs were made on the very eve of the armistice, that is on November 7, 1918, when the war against the Turks was over. This last promise was elicited by an incident that was indicative of the contradictions in the Allied attitude. In Beirut the Arabs had hoisted a new national flag, and the French

insisted upon its removal. To everyone's surprise the British felt unwilling or unable to refuse the French request. The removal of the flag—an act in which the Arabs sensed sinister portents—provoked violent disturbances among them. In an effort to pacify inflamed spirits, Great Britain and France published jointly a communiqué to which they gave the widest publicity both through the press and through oral announcements. This communiqué, known as the 'Anglo-French Declaration', stated that 'the goal envisaged by France and Great Britain' was 'the complete and final liberation of the peoples who have for so long been oppressed by the Turks, and the setting up of national governments and administrations that shall derive their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of their indigenous populations'. Both Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Syria were mentioned specifically as the countries to receive indigenous governments, the term 'Syria', at that time denoting the whole of geographical Syria, from the Taurus range in the north to the Egyptian frontier in the south. Far from mentioning the establishment of a French or British mandate or of a Jewish state, the declaration made it clear that neither Britain nor France had the 'wish to impose this or that system upon the population of these regions', their sole aim being to 'ensure the smooth working of the governments and administrations which those populations will have elected of their own free will'.

A few months after the conclusion of the Hussein-McMahon negotiations, the Arabs began to fulfil their part of the agreement, the sharif entering the war on June 5, 1916. Their first step was to attack the Turkish garrison at Mecca, and by July 9th the Turks admitted their defeat and, together with their deputy-governor, were taken prisoners. In his first public declaration Hussein justified the stand he took on the basis of religion and nationalism, and he called upon Muslims throughout the world to support him as guardian of Mecca and in the cause of Muslim solidarity. The first effect of the Arab revolt was to frustrate the German-Turkish attempt to block the Red Sea from the Yemen. By the end of the year, the Hijaz, with the exception of Medina, was cleared of the Turks. With the fall of Akaba in July 1917, the first phase of the Desert War was over, and Feisal, supported by Lord Allenby's operations from Egypt,

began his adventurous push towards Damascus. It was during that phase of the war that Feisal had to exert all his gifts of leadership and statesmanship in order to hold the diverse Bedouin tribes together and to teach them to fight a common national war under a unified command rather than the type of war to which they were accustomed, that is of tribe against tribe. On September 30, 1918, Damascus was captured, and Feisal's and Allenby's armies entered the Syrian capital almost simultaneously, the two leaders meeting in a city described as being in a frenzy of joy. By the end of October, the combined British and Arab forces inflicted a series of further defeats upon the Turks, and Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Beirut were liberated.

The price the Arabs paid for their liberation from the Turks was not insignificant. The famine which in 1916 ravaged Syria and the Lebanon was exploited by the Turks as a political weapon against the pro-Allied population, food being deliberately withheld. Over 300,000 Syrians perished from starvation. Some 3,000 were imprisoned by the Turks, and a large proportion of them died through ill-treatment. Together with the losses sustained in actual battle, Syria must have sacrificed the best part of half a million people out of its population of under four million. To these must be added those Arabs killed in battle who had come from farther south or farther north.

When the moment arrived for the joint Allied promises to be put into effect, the basis for such action might reasonably be expected to combine recommendations of the communiqué of November 7, 1918, the Declaration to the Seven and the McMahon correspondence; but the basis proved to be the Sykes-Picot agreement which had so alarmed Hussein. That secret agreement dictated Allied policy during the Peace Conference at Versailles and the conferences of San Remo and Cairo of 1920 and 1922 respectively. In 1919, when Feisal arrived in Paris to lay the Arab case before the Peace Conference, he found that the oft-repeated Allied promises were being overruled by French interest in Syria and the Lebanon, by British imperial interests in Iraq and Palestine and by Zionist interests in this last country. He learned with astonishment that Britain's assertions of February 1918 concerning the Turkish policy to 'create dissension by luring the Arabs into believing that the Allied Powers had designs on the Arab countries' had not been made in good faith.

In June 1918 Feisal had been given personal assurances by Dr Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader, that the 'Zionists had no intention of working for the establishment of a Jewish Government in Palestine'. Yet, in order to avoid a rupture with the Foreign Office in London—his trust in Britain's word still being unshaken—Feisal consented, in January 1919, to sign an agreement with the Zionist leader in which he met the latter more than half-way. Thus he consented that 'all such measures shall be adopted as will afford the fullest guarantees for carrying into effect the British Government's Declaration of the 2nd of November, 1917, to wit, the Balfour Declaration. Feisal stipulated, however, that his agreement with Dr Weizmann was valid only under the following conditions

But if the slightest modification or departure were to be made [in relation to the demands in Feisal's Memorandum] I shall not then be bound by a single word of the present Agreement which shall be deemed void and of no account or validity, and I shall not be answerable in any way whatsoever.

This statement was signed jointly by Feisal and Weizmann, who thus pledged his word that he would make his own demands subsidiary to fulfilment of the Allied promises to the Arabs.

The betrayal of the Arabs was finally clinched at the Conference of San Remo, in the spring of 1921, when the Allied Supreme Council parcelled out the Arab lands between France and Great Britain. When the decisions taken at San Remo were made public on May 5th there was profound consternation in the Arab world. But by that time the Allies no longer depended on Arab armed support, and the Arab reactions, whatever their nature, could be urbanely endured. Thus we find Palestine and Iraq under British dominion; France in complete control of Syria and the Lebanon; and the Zionists going ahead with plans not merely for the establishment in Palestine of 'a national home for the Jewish people' without attempting anything 'which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities', but for the laying of foundations for a political state in Palestine.

Later Arab accusations that Britain had acted with deliberate treachery towards the Sharif Hussein and his sons, and that she was

but a tool of international Zionism are not supported by facts. Britain acted as she did because, as so often happens in the heat of battle, she found herself making commitments that were mutually contradictory, and, because of her wartime need of Arab support, she promised the Arabs more than was compatible with her overall imperial interests. Yet, even though some of the promises given in the McMahon correspondence showed the customary vagueness of diplomatic commitments, their main tenor was such as to justify the Arab interpretation which saw them as solid and clearly defined undertakings favouring Arab interests. The British spokesmen, deeply versed in Arab affairs, and fully cognizant of the ways in which Arab minds work, must have been fully aware of this. Not surprisingly, the post-war settlements left the Arabs with a sense of profound grievance and betrayal. In the years to come these sentiments inevitably coloured their attitudes and policies towards Great Britain, France and the West in general. Their chief grudge was France's failure to do the right thing by the Arabs, for prior to 1914 they had respected and admired France more than any other country of Europe. After the war they knew only too well that it was French insistence at Versailles and San Remo that must bear the main responsibility for the carving up of the Fertile Crescent into French and British spheres. The French, personified by their great premier Clemenceau, had insisted upon their pound of flesh in the Near East, and the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, despite his efforts to stand by his country's promises to the Arabs and to salvage Britain's good name, was condemned to failure because of France's intransigence.

Whatever the juridical interpretation of this or that point emerging from the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, the fact remains that, throughout the war, the Arabs believed that the reward for their contributions towards an Allied victory would be complete independence for the entire Fertile Crescent. To the present day they regard the political occupation of any part of that area by foreigners as a violation of pledges which, for their part, they had signed with the blood they spilled in the Desert War.



## III EGYPT

The first Near Eastern country to gain independence from Ottoman rule was Egypt. Geographical position, antiquity and the size of its population—close to twenty-five million in 1958—have made it the most important country within the Arab world. Yet racially the Egyptian—Hamitic rather than Semitic—is not identical with the Arab, and represents something of a race apart. From 1517 on, when the Nile Delta was conquered by the Ottomans, Egypt retained a fair measure of independence under its Mamluk beys. The rule of these beys came to an end in 1798, when Napoleon defeated them in the Battle of the Pyramids, thus opening the land of the Pharaohs to Europe.

In the nineteenth century two events dominated Egyptian history: the establishment of a quasi-independent dynasty in 1805 by Muhammad Ali, the officer of Albanian origin who, as the Ottoman Governor of Egypt, founded a dynasty that ended only in 1952 with the expulsion of King Farouk; and Egypt's occupation by Britain in 1882 which, in 1914, was followed by the declaration of an official British protectorate over Egypt. Though under the British Egypt made rapid advances in the economic, administrative and social spheres, native resentment of the foreign rule grew in intensity from year to year. The chief organizer and spokesman of that opposition was Sad Zaghlul Pasha, founder of the Wafd (Delegation) party, who in 1919 demanded autonomy for his country. In 1922 Britain renounced her protectorate, but she reserved for herself certain decisive rights, such as the defence of Egypt, the protection of minorities and of foreign rights and that of retaining her troops and many of her officials in Egypt. In the same year the Khedive Fuad, a descendant of Muhammad Ali, was permitted by the British to assume the title of king. Nevertheless the Wafd party continued to fight for factual and not merely nominal independence. After Zaghlul's death the dominating personality in native politics became his former secretary Nahhas Pasha, the new leader of the Wafd and, subsequently, Prime Minister on several occasions. His struggle was directed not merely against the British but also against King Fuad, and after the latter's death in 1937 against his son Farouk, both of whom were attempting to ride roughshod over parliament and government. Britain's control over Farouk and his government was tightened up during World War II when

Egypt became the basis of Allied operations in the North African desert campaign.

The years following upon the war found the king and the Wafd discredited. The personal life of Farouk and of some of the Wafd leaders and the corruption rampant at the royal court isolated both the monarchy and the party from the masses. The ineffectual parliamentary regime, too, was seen for the sham it was. Such organized power as existed was concentrated chiefly in the hands of three groups: the Communists (who, however, were lacking popular support), the powerful Muslim Brotherhood (whose terrorist methods alienated many people and which, in 1949, was driven underground) and the movement of the Free Officers.

It was this last military group which on July 23, 1952, staged a *coup d'état* and forced Farouk's abdication. Led nominally by the popular General Muhammad Neguib, the revolution first pinned its hopes on the proper functioning of a civilian government headed by Ali Maher, a politician of the old school. By September 7th, Ali Maher was forced to resign and Neguib became Prime Minister. The real power, however, lay in the hands of a junta of young officers headed by their as yet little known *spiritus rector*, the dynamic young Lt.-Col. Gamal Abd el-Nasser. While General Neguib seemed disposed to compromise with the past, the junta was determined to bring about a complete break with it and with the country's discredited democratic institutions, as well as its rich landowning classes. In November 1953 the junta deposed President Neguib, and Nasser became his country's true ruler. He did not attempt to assume the powers of an autocrat on the Hitler-Mussolini-Stalin model, but acted as the head and spokesman, as it were, of his military friends.

Though politically inexperienced, Nasser and his military junta were genuinely eager to improve conditions in Egypt, a country suffering from poverty, malnutrition, epidemics, illiteracy and an economic system that permitted the national wealth to be concentrated in a few powerful hands. One of the first measures Nasser took was to share out the big estates, permitting their former owners to retain only 200 feddan. The rest was to be divided among the fellahin (peasants). For the first time in many years the budget was balanced. The work of draining marshland was taken in hand; new agricultural settlements were founded; Christians and Jews were

given the status of first-class citizens, that is to say, complete equality with the Muslims; titles were abolished, and so were the traditional methods of graft in the administration.

It would appear that had Colonel Nasser's and the junta's reforming zest been permitted to express itself unimpeded, more spectacular results might have been achieved than actually did come about. Unfortunately, from 1956 on, foreign affairs monopolized most of the Egyptian government's attention. In January 1956 a new constitution was published, and a plebiscite approved both it and Colonel Nasser's presidency. On July 20th the United States of America withdrew its offer to finance the High Dam at Assuan, one of the crucial schemes for the improvement of Egyptian economy, one, moreover, that lay very near to Colonel Nasser's heart. In retaliation, six days later, the Egyptian president announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal. While negotiations on the future of the canal were still proceeding, on October 29th Israeli forces invaded Egypt, and on the following day an Anglo-French ultimatum was presented to Egypt which, on the 31st, was followed by Anglo-French air operations against that country. In spite of an immediate resolution of the United Nations Assembly commanding the three aggressors to withdraw their troops, it was not until the end of the year that Britain and France complied with the resolution, while Israel did not do so until several months later.

The attack by Israel had been more or less expected by the Egyptians; the assault by France and Britain, however, took them completely by surprise. Throughout the Arab world that assault was uncompromisingly interpreted as a revival of old-type colonialism, known as 'gun-boat' politics. Regardless of the justice or otherwise of the British measure, its chief effect was that Britain lost much of the prestige that she had until then managed to retain in the Near East and of the goodwill that she had earned in Africa and in Asia by her voluntary withdrawal in 1947 from her Asian possessions. This loss was injurious not only to Great Britain but even to the Arabs themselves, for, in spite of everything, Britain's influence in the Near East has, by and large, been a civilizing one, and the influence of any successor, of any newcomer, Eastern or Western, who would of course lack Britain's experience of that part of the world, could hardly be as far-reaching and useful.

The relations of the Arab countries with France showed great strain even before 1956. France had always enjoyed immense favour throughout the Near East as a mentor in things cultural. But her political record in Syria and the Lebanon, the civil wars fought against her by the Moroccans and Tunisians in the early fifties, and her war in Algeria had combined to build up a fierce antagonism. Thus the events of November 1956 could hardly worsen relations, for they were already as bad as they could be. What did matter, however, was that anti-Western conceptions that had been losing some of their virulence were now revived with a greatly increased animus. Though the proclamation of the Eisenhower doctrines early in 1957 should have weakened the Arabs' determination to identify United States policies with Western colonialism, it did little to restore the Near East's trust in the Western Powers. It was, in fact, Nasser's Egypt which rightly or wrongly came to symbolize the Near East's most uncompromising anti-Western attitudes.

Within a year or so, Western miscalculations succeeded in producing results that, for centuries, had escaped all the cunning of the Tsars, and Russia gained a foothold in the Near East. To the Egyptians (and to many other Arabs), the U.S.S.R. appeared as a selfless ally, whereas the West 'with its Zionist satellite' they branded as *the* enemy. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to interpret the Arab attitude as being 'pro-Communist'. What many Arabs believed was that, while Russia would offer them much-needed assistance free from political strings, the West continued to treat them as pawns in its own political games, still inspired, as these were said to be, by outdated colonialist concepts. Whether Arab faith in Russian disinterestedness was justified or not was not the point; what mattered was that Russian policies disclosed a deeper comprehension of Arab aspirations than did those of the West.

Though, at the time of writing, it is too early to appraise correctly the events of February 1958, the creation of the United Arab Republic suggested that its founders were not unaware of the danger of too close an association with Communism. Many Arab observers claimed that the joining together of Egypt and Syria would give the two countries greater power to stand up both to the threats of Communism whether from within or from without, and to any other inner or foreign antagonist. The West, on the other hand, in assessing the

significance of the merger, emphasized the undoubted geographic and economic disparities within the new Republic. In doing so, the West disclosed its perennial misapprehension of the Arab yearning for unity. Most Arabs insist that that sentiment is sufficiently decisive to overrule the existing dynastic, economic and social frictions within their camp. So even for Arabs who did not necessarily agree with all of President Nasser's ideas, the Egyptian leader became the symbol of that yearning and of the means towards its fulfilment. By trying either to discredit or to weaken him, the West merely gave him additional powers.

The formation of the United Arab Republic represented an event of the greatest significance in the Arab world. Both Syria and its President, Shukri al-Kuwatly, renounced voluntarily their sovereignty. Though, in theory, Syria was to be an equal partner, in actual fact, the decisive voice was with Egypt and its President. Half of the members of the new National Assembly were Egyptian and half Syrian; the Republic was divided into an Egyptian and a Syrian province; each province was given its own executive council, and provincial administration remained unchanged; a permanent, common Constitution was to be drafted and the army became united. But Nasser was President of the new Republic, and most of the important posts in the single Cabinet went to Egyptians. In view of the numerical disparity between the two provinces, this was, of course, inevitable.

How non-committed Arabs evaluated the advantages likely to accrue from the new merger was expressed by Adil Osseiran, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. According to him, the new union meant both greater strength and stability to both partners; it gave them 'a greater chance of living honestly and industriously'; it enabled them to put an end to 'imperialist infiltration of whatever kind' and to contain Israel; it elevated the Arab nation to world power; and it brought the 'attainment of peace in the area'.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV LIBYA

The emergence, in 1956, of Morocco and Tunisia as independent states has helped to emphasize the historical fact that, while we are entitled

<sup>1</sup> *Middle East Forum*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3. Beirut, Lebanon, March 1958.

to speak of one Arab world, it cannot be denied that that world is composed of two distinct sections: the eastern one, comprising the Arabian peninsula, Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, and the western, known as the Maghreb, and consisting of Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Though the two share Islam, the Arabic language and innumerable historical and cultural traditions, the Maghreb still does not belong to the Near East, geographically forms a part of the West, and both in history and culture has an individuality of its own. The existence of an indigenous Berber population, Hispano-Moorish civilization, sea-faring activities symbolized by the name 'Salli Rovers', are but a few of the elements that illustrate that individuality.

The country that might be said to form the dividing area between eastern and western Arabism is Libya, heir of important Greek and Roman colonies. Conquered by the Vandals and then by the Byzantines, Libya became a part of the Arab empire, but in the twelfth century was taken by the Normans from Sicily, and in the sixteenth century by the Spanish Ferdinand the Catholic who passed it on to the Knights of St John. From the sixteenth century until the nineteenth century Libya, or rather Tripolitania, as it was then known, played a leading part in North African piracy. Nominally under the Ottomans, from 1711 until 1835, Tripolitania was ruled by the more or less independent Karamanli dynasty. It was these Karamanli deys to whom, after 1796, the American government had to pay heavy tribute as a safeguard against Tripolitanian corsairs. In 1835 the Ottomans reconquered Tripolitania, to lose it in 1912 to the Italians. The Italians, especially under Mussolini, cherished the somewhat unrealistic ambition of converting Tripolitania into a model colony that would absorb most of Italy's unemployable and almost unfeedable population, but they lost the country in 1943, after the British had defeated them and their German allies in the famous desert battles of World War II.

After the war the three Libyan provinces, Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan, were united and, on December 24, 1951, the United Nations created out of them the new kingdom of Libya, with Muhammad Sayed Idris al Sanusi as its first king. King Idris I had been the head of the Sanusi fraternity, a nineteenth-century religious reform movement which for the best part of a hundred years had been very

active in Cyrenaica. By the twentieth century the Sanusi came to symbolize local nationalism and opposition to the Ottomans, and after the conquest of their country by the Italians they became the spearhead of native revolts against the foreign domination.

'The United Kingdom of Libya' is a hereditary monarchy with a representative government responsible to parliament. Each of the three provinces—Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan—has its own provincial government, responsible for local affairs, while national affairs are the responsibility of the federal government. In a country about a quarter the size of the United States of America more than 80 per cent of which is desert, with a population amounting to less than one-hundredth of that of the United States (just over one million), consisting of three separate provinces each with its strongly particularistic outlook and allegiances, in a country, moreover, with two different capitals (Tripoli and Benghazi), the co-existence side by side of a federal government and provincial governments might be inevitable, but it hardly makes for efficiency. It must be admitted that Libya represents a somewhat artificial entity the stability of which is rendered even more precarious by great poverty and an almost complete lack of natural resources. It is doubtful whether Libya could survive economically were it not for foreign assistance. Thus the United Kingdom provides £3·75 million in the form of an outright grant; the United States paid in 1954 \$5 million, and for some twenty years is to pay \$2 million annually for the lease of air bases; and some fairly substantial additional sums. By the means of various foreign-assisted development plans attempts are being made to improve the country's economic conditions by modernizing the harbours of Tripoli and Benghazi; by the installation of cold-storage plants; by road-building, and by improved methods in animal husbandry and agriculture.

In the inter-Arab political conflicts of recent years, Libya assumed a relatively neutral attitude. It would seem, however, that should Algeria obtain independence and the whole of North Africa be free from colonialist domination, Libya would be likely to join some form of North African confederation rather than a distinctly Near Eastern bloc.

In 1920, when the French took over Syria, that country's inhabitants felt their unexpected subjection to foreign rule even more keenly than did the Arabs of other lands. For a long time Syria (with the Lebanon) could claim to be the intellectual centre of Arab nationalism. It enjoyed a measure of national and cultural awareness well in advance of that prevailing in most other Arab countries. Strangely enough, the stimulus for the birth of that new awareness came, at least in part, from foreigners, mainly the Americans. The Presbyterian College in Beirut, founded in 1866, and eventually to become the American University of Beirut, was the first modern educational centre in the Near East where young Arabs could gain a scholarly knowledge of their great cultural and national past. Thus they found means of comparing that past with their politically and culturally stifling conditions under the Ottomans. So it was mainly in Syria that Arab nationalism found some of its most articulate exponents. And it was to Damascus that, early in World War I, the Sharif Hussein dispatched his son Feisal to consult with the Syrian nationalists about his plans of joining Great Britain against Turkey.

Following upon a succession of Arab victories over the Turks in the field, and basing themselves on repeated Allied promises, in March 1920 the Syrian patriots proclaimed an independent Greater Syria, and established a government under the Emir Feisal. But in April of the same year the San Remo conference gave France a mandate over the whole of Syria, and in July France occupied Damascus, expelling Feisal. In their plans to prevent united action on the part of the Syrians and to exercise effective control over them, the French divided Syria into four sections: a Syrian Republic with Damascus as capital, an enlarged Lebanon with Beirut, and the districts of Lakatia and Jebel Druse. As an answer to native revolts in 1925 and 1926 the French bombarded Damascus, causing much damage to what claims to be the oldest continually inhabited city in the world. By 1928 the French permitted elections to a Constituent Assembly and the drafting of a Constitution. They refused, however, to accept that Constitution. The years that followed were a long succession of native outbreaks against French rule. But when in 1936 the Popular Front (with the Socialist Léon Blum as Premier) came



to power in France, the French were prevailed upon to sign a treaty by which the principle of Syrian independence was recognized. Nevertheless, the French parliament refused to ratify the treaty, and thus it remained invalid. It was not until 1945 that the French occupation came to an end, after British troops, on orders from their government, intervened, and finally forced the evacuation of the French army and officials. The British troops left the country several months later.

Having in April 1946 attained the status of a fully independent republic with a modern democratic Constitution, Syria became almost morbidly jealous of both her independence and of her republican system. She viewed the Hashimite monarchies of Iraq and Transjordan with suspicion, and her relations with both of these knew few periods of cordiality. Her passionate concern with her own independence often conflicted with her all-Arab nationalism and her pronounced ambitions towards a single unified Arab State. For such a state could obviously come into existence only at the expense of Syrian independence; and, whatever its structure, the royal councils of the Hashimites (and Saudis) would be likely to be of at least as much account as those of republican Syrians.

The years of plotting and under-cover activity, first against the Ottomans and then against the French, had not provided the Syrians with the best type of education for teamwork and political democracy. The country's poverty and precarious economic position called for strong, stable and single-minded governments. Instead, political strife and a succession of short-lived military dictatorships became the order of the day. The colonial principle of 'divide and rule' applied by the French between 1922 and 1945 had fostered regional and local allegiances at the expense of national solidarities; it had deepened the religious differences between the various denominational groups. At the same time the passionate opposition to the foreign regime had fostered the development of a nationalism that easily assumed exaggerated and unrealistic forms. It was significant that Syria—industrially backward and predominantly agricultural—was the only Arab country in the Near East that refused to accept Point IV aid from the United States of America, even though for at least a transitional period Syria could ill afford to do without some foreign capital and foreign technical assistance. Her economic situation was aggravated

by the fact that her money was linked to the French franc so that her exchange had to follow the unhealthy fluctuations of the French exchange. Syria's mistrust of the West found expression in action after 1954, when her relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Russia's satellites assumed a new cordiality, and she entered into a number of financial and other agreements with member states of the Communist bloc.

That in spite of the chequered nature of independent Syria's history, the country decided to sacrifice its sovereignty and to join Egypt, in February 1958, was but a proof of the potency of its all-Arab tendencies. Its economic considerations and its various particularist ambitions should, possibly, have driven Syria in quite a different direction. Yet, in the end, all these proved far less decisive than did the deep-rooted yearning for an all-Arab unity. Only the future can tell whether, in alliance with a neighbour so much larger and stronger than itself, Syria will be able to retain its specific identity. For, however much a Syrian and an Egyptian might consider themselves as Arab and nothing but Arab, there is no denying the fact that Syrian and Egyptian are not identical. There is, however, no reason to assume that political unity will prevent them from retaining their individuality in the same way that the English, the Scots and the Welsh have retained theirs within one politico-national body known as the United Kingdom.

## VI THE LEBANON

The Lebanon has always occupied a somewhat exceptional position within the Arab world, for it was the only Arab country in which the Muslim and Christian sections of the populations more or less balanced one another. Even under the Ottomans the Lebanon enjoyed protracted periods of virtual independence—under the Maan dynasty in the seventeenth century and under the Shihabs from 1697 till 1840. When in that year the Ottomans resumed their full control, the French showed an increasing interest in the Lebanon's Christian communities, and in 1864 the country obtained an 'organic statute', according to which it was to be governed by an Ottoman-appointed

but Christian governor who had to be approved by the Great Powers of Europe.

The French rule in the Lebanon after 1920 differed little from that in Syria, even though the native reactions to it were less antagonistic. Many of the Lebanese, especially the Christian, appeared to feel as closely akin to the French spirit as to that of Arabism. Moreover, some of them had been made to believe that the '*présence française*' was the main guarantee of their religious rights. The country's economic situation was not such as might excite avarice, and the relative absence of violent political frictions assured the Lebanon a fair measure of peace and prosperity. Its main religious dichotomy was resolved by an agreement which laid down the proviso that the President had to be a Christian and the Prime Minister a Muslim. Like Syria, the Lebanon guarded jealously its republican Constitution. In May 1936, again as with Syria, the country signed a treaty of independence with France which the French parliament refused to ratify. In November 1941 General Catroux, the French Commander newly appointed by the Free French, proclaimed the Lebanon an independent state. Yet when, two years later, the predominantly nationalist parliament came into conflict with the French authorities, the latter did not hesitate to arrest the President of the Lebanon and to suspend the Constitution. It was only in 1946 that, as a result of American and British pressure, the French finally withdrew, and the respect which the Lebanese formerly felt for them naturally was greatly diminished.

Though small and bereft of any important economic resources, the Lebanon is by no means satisfied with playing the role of poor relation within the greater Arab family. In fact, its comparatively high standards of literacy and political maturity entitle it to that same kind of prestige which Switzerland enjoys in Europe. This being so, it was only natural that the small state should view the successive frictions within the Arab League with grave concern. Likewise, it could not but feel disturbed by the perennial mooted project for a Greater Syria, a political entity that would include both Iraq and the Lebanon and in which the latter's identity might easily become submerged.

While the political upheavals in the Lebanon were neither as frequent nor as violent as were those in Syria, the country had its share of these. But thanks to the existence of a French university, and especially of the American University in Beirut, the country had a

comparatively large number of men trained in modern political and scientific disciplines, and was able to run a democratic machinery with greater success than some of its neighbours seemed able to achieve. It was hardly accidental that, in the 'fifties, the outstanding Arab personality in international affairs was a Lebanese, Charles Malik, his country's representative at the United Nations and, later, its Foreign Secretary.

An intrinsically poor and almost entirely agricultural country, the Lebanon has in recent years supported its economy by the considerable revenues paid by the oil companies whose pipe-lines carry the oil of Iraq and Saudi Arabia across Lebanese territory to its Mediterranean port of Sidon. Another important source of revenue is provided by the Lebanon's miscellaneous financial, commercial and transit services, which have made of Beirut an influential business centre for the entire Middle East. An almost complete absence of restrictions on the movements of capital and goods has turned the Lebanon (as it has Tangier) into one of the few remaining 'free' markets in the modern world. The Lebanese have always shown a marked aptitude for trade and commerce. Thus they have procured for their country standards of living superior even to those of Near Eastern countries which enjoy far more abundant economic resources.

At the time of writing it is too early to say whether, in view of Syria's submergence within the new United Arab Republic, the Lebanon will be able to retain its own higher standards as in fact its political sovereignty. It would seem, however, that the Lebanese themselves realize how natural and inevitable is the movement towards some form of Arab unity.

## VII IRAQ

Iraq, or Mesopotamia, known for centuries as Babylonia, can look back on one of the most ancient civilizations of which we have record. After numerous ups and downs it emerged in the eighth century A.D. as the centre of the Islamic empire with Baghdad as its capital. Larger than most of the countries of the Fertile Crescent, it none the less shared the fate of most other lands under the Ottomans.

As a result of the Allied decisions following upon World War I, Iraq became a British mandate. This awakened violent native opposition, and in 1921 the British—more adept in the handling of colonial affairs than some of their allies—terminated direct military rule, substituting an Arab Council of State which, with the support of British officials, assumed administrative powers. On August 23, 1921, Britain presented the Emir Feisal—actually an exile from Syria—with the throne of Iraq. Iraq thus became the first Hashimite kingdom. Four years later an elected parliament was introduced. During the following years British influence proved of very real assistance to the new and as yet inexperienced state. Considerable advances were made in the fields of administration, interior security, education, technical training and sanitation. Poverty and discontent, however, were still rife, most of the land being owned by a comparatively small group of the wealthy. But unlike Egypt (and, to a lesser extent, Syria) Iraq was potentially wealthy, disposing of large tracts of fertile land and of two of the mightiest rivers of the world, the Tigris and Euphrates, each offering great possibilities for irrigation. Politically, however, the country was going through the usual teething troubles of a backward community trying to work the unaccustomed machinery of modern democracy. The political instability is reflected in the frequency with which governments succeeded one another. Thus between 1921 and 1952 Iraq saw as many as forty-seven different cabinets come and go. In spite of this Britain proposed that Iraq should be admitted into the League of Nations, which accepted it in 1932, after Britain had given the necessary guarantees. Iraq was more fortunate in her foreign advisers than were some of the other Arab states. In consequence, anti-Western xenophobia was less prevalent than it was in most parts of the Middle East. Realizing that for some time to come Iraq would have to rely on some form of foreign technical advice and assistance, its rulers decided that it would be wiser to maintain old links with Britain than to seek new and unproven allies. It was thus not fortuitous that Iraq should become the one Arab country forming part of the Baghdad Pact alignment. Originally that pact was neither as complex in its aims nor as diversified in its membership as it was to become eventually. Its origin was a bilateral treaty for mutual assistance signed in February 1955 between Iraq and its Turkish neighbours. It was only in April of that same year

that Britain consented to terminate her 1930 treaty with Iraq and to abandon her air bases at Shuayba and Habbaniya, joining instead the Baghdad alliance. A few months later that alliance was enlarged by the entry of Iran and Pakistan. Finally, in 1957, the United States of America joined it, though in a more limited capacity.

Iraq's active co-operation with the Western Powers was criticized in many Arab quarters, especially in Egypt and Syria, where it was denounced as a betrayal of the common Arab cause. In other quarters, however, it was interpreted as a proof of Iraq's political realism and maturity.

Iraq's adherence to the Baghdad Pact, in common with her opposition to Communism, and her foreign policy in general, were mainly the work of the man who dominated the national scene from the very earliest days of his country's independence, namely Nuri Said, repeatedly Iraq's Prime Minister and one of the strongest personalities to emerge from the restless drama of Arab politics. It was due to him, too, that Iraq embarked upon its impressive development scheme financed entirely from the royalties accruing from the rich oilfields.

While the first oil concession was granted to the Iraq Petroleum Co. in 1925 (it is to expire in 2000), Iraq did not become an important oil producer until 1945. The concession is owned in equal parts by British, United States, Dutch and French oil companies, with a minor participation of the Gulbenkian Estate. By 1955 some 33 million tons of crude oil were being produced per year, the revenues from which reached about \$460 million. Iraq's share amounted to \$200 million. Under the agreement of 1952 with the company (I.P.C.), the Iraqi State received half of the company's profit after payment of income tax and on the basis of a minimum annual output of 30 million tons. No less than 70 per cent of the state's oil revenues is being passed on to the Economic Development Board created in 1950. Though responsible to a special Minister of Development, a post created in 1953 by special law, the Board works practically as an autonomous body, one of its members being an American and another a British economist. The amount the Board was hoping to spend for its five-year plan 1955-1960 was almost \$1½ billion. Thanks to the existence and the functions of the Board, Iraq's revenues, probably for the first time in its history, have been utilized for the benefit of the entire community rather than for certain privileged classes. Enormous

dams, wide-scale irrigation and draining of marshlands were among the Board's priority projects. Considerable sums have been and are to be spent on new roads, housing, schools and hospitals. Finally, even an opera house is projected for Baghdad. With its ambitious and well-executed development plans, Iraq has certainly shown by what means an under-developed country can use, rationally and profitably, riches that have unexpectedly fallen into its lap.

It was inevitable that the creation of the new United Arab Republic, in February 1958, should induce the Iraqi authorities to counter with a corresponding move of their own. Together with Jordan, they formed the Federated Arab States. This royal federation was to be less intimate than was the Egypto-Syrian. While Iraq's and Jordan's flags, armies, foreign policies and foreign services became one, and a federal legislature was set up, the two monarchs retained their thrones.

As a result of this federation, the conflict between its two members and the Syrian-Egyptian alliance became even more accentuated. The reasons for that conflict were too numerous to permit for easy hopes of an early harmony between the two blocs. Both Egypt and Syria had been viewing enviously Iraq's great wealth, and her monarchic system and her close relations with the West had been abhorrent to them. Moreover, within Iraq herself, many people, especially among the intelligentsia and the young, were in deeper sympathy with the ideas and policies symbolized by President Nasser than they were with the far less spectacular ones of their own rulers. So the only certainty about the future fate of the new Federated Arab States is its uncertainty.

#### VIII JORDAN

While the state of Jordan as at present constituted might be considered a somewhat artificial and possibly impermanent entity, the country itself, although its name has varied from time to time, is among the oldest in the world. It covers the Biblical lands of Gilead, Moab, Ammon and Edom; in the sixth century B.C., under the Nabataeans, its capital was the famous Petra; under the Seleucids, two hundred years later, Amman (its present capital) was founded (when

it was called Philadelphia). Then, for hundreds of years, it formed part of Syria, eventually to come under the sway of the Ottomans.

During World War I most of the territory that was to become Jordan was captured by the Arab armies fighting under Emir Feisal, who regarded it as part of the independent Syrian kingdom that he was hoping to see established. By a decision of the San Remo conference of 1920, however, that area was separated from Syria and, together with Palestine, became a British mandate. It was at the Cairo conference of March 1921 that Feisal was compensated with the throne of Iraq, and that, for his elder brother Abdallah, the new state of Transjordan was carved out.

For a number of years Abdallah's sovereignty remained more or less fictitious, all effective control being retained by the British. In a treaty of May 15, 1923, the British government recognized Transjordan as an independent state; nevertheless, Britain still remained in control. A native army, known as the Arab Legion and composed chiefly of desert Bedouins, was formed by the British officer Peake Pasha (who later on was succeeded by Glubb Pasha) and trained by British officers. In 1928 a new treaty was signed with Britain, and a Constitution was introduced. It was not, however, until May 1939 that Abdallah was permitted to have his own government.

Although the slowness of Transjordan's advance towards complete independence was much criticized in the Arab world, it must be remembered that when in 1921 the new country was created, it had neither funds nor personnel, nor even the machinery for the running of a modern state. It obviously had to mark time until trained native administrators were available. Moreover, the country was extremely poor. It had next to no industries, and even its agricultural resources were limited, large tracts of Transjordan being desert. Year after year the new state had to be financed by the British taxpayer, and Britain felt entitled to exercise some control over the use of her subsidies. In 1945 Transjordan joined the newly founded Arab League, and in the following spring the treaty of London gave it full independence, and Abdallah was permitted to assume the title of king. Britain, nevertheless, still maintained certain defence privileges, and British officers, headed by Glubb Pasha, retained their control over the Arab Legion.

In the 1948 Arab war against Israel, troops from Transjordan played



a decisive part, and they succeeded in occupying most of the territory which, in establishing the state of Israel, the United Nations had assigned to the Arabs. The efforts of certain Palestinian Arabs to form an effective government in Gaza came to nothing, and in December 1948 Abdallah, whose troops were in control of eastern Palestine, proclaimed himself King of All-Palestine. In April of the following year Transjordan changed its name to Jordan, and Palestinians were included in its government. With the new territorial additions from Palestine, Jordan found itself enlarged by about two thousand square miles, and its population increased from under half a million to three times that figure. Most of the newcomers, however, were refugees from the Israeli parts of Palestine, and they were hoping to return to their ancestral land and to recover their former estates and homes. Dissatisfied and deeply resentful of their status of homeless and underprivileged refugees, they soon became an important but also disturbing factor in Jordanian politics. Not surprisingly, it was among them that some of the most intransigent, anti-Israeli elements were to be found.

King Abdallah, a man of great intelligence and an astute politician of marked personal ambition, had always hoped to see the establishment of a Greater Syria that would unite, under his rule, Syria, Palestine, the Lebanon and Iraq. His plans were naturally viewed with the utmost suspicion by the other Arab leaders, especially by those nationalists for whom active co-operation with Great Britain was tantamount to a betrayal of the Arab cause. The antagonism to Abdallah was strongest in Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia whose royal house was traditionally opposed to the Hashimite dynasty that Abdallah represented. On July 20, 1951, Abdallah was assassinated in Jerusalem. The murder was a political one, its instigators being opponents of the victim's Greater Syria plans. Abdallah was succeeded by his son Talal, whose mental condition, however, caused grave anxiety and who abdicated a year later in favour of his young son Hussein, crowned on May 2, 1953.

Early in 1956 the general trend of Arab politics and tendencies within the Palestine section of Jordan's population forced King Hussein to dismiss the British General Glubb Pasha from the command of the Jordanian army and to replace him by an Arab officer, and finally to abrogate the 1948 treaty with Great Britain and to relinquish financial aid from that country. Egypt, Syria and Saudi

Arabia declared themselves willing to provide for Jordan an annual subsidy that would replace the £12,800,000 (\$35·8 million) hitherto provided by Britain. But when the first payments were due to be made early in 1957 only Saudi Arabia provided its share (just under £5 million), neither Syria nor Egypt being able or willing to keep their part of the bargain. In the spring of the same year a conflict developed between the young king and Jordan's anti-Western faction, strongly entrenched in the government. For several weeks the fate of Hussein and of the monarchy was in the balance. Finally, however, the king emerged victorious and sufficiently strong to accept American financial aid for his country. Nevertheless, so long as the Arab world continues to be dominated by the tension between the pro-Western and anti-Western camps and by the problems of Israel, the position of Hussein and even that of his country must be regarded as anything but stable. Without adequate economic resources of its own, Jordan is condemned to depend upon foreign assistance, and thus its independence is a highly problematical affair.

Whether its position has been strengthened or not by the deliberate, though only partial, abandonment of its sovereignty within the Federated Arab States the future alone can tell.

#### IX SAUDI ARABIA

While Jordan is one of the poorest Arab countries, Saudi Arabia is one of the richest. Its wealth, however, is of very recent date, and when it came it found the country unprepared for it. For until the present century the core of what has become Saudi Arabia was formed by one of the most primitive, most secluded areas of the Near East. Ever since the middle of the eighteenth century the Sauds, ruling house of the Nejd in the heart of the Arabian peninsula, identified themselves with the Puritanical doctrine of Abdel Wahhab, the founder of a militant, reactionary religious sect. The Wahhabi form of Islam became the country's official religion. Though Wahhabism claims absolute orthodoxy, the majority of Muslims deny the validity of such a claim. By the end of the nineteenth century the Sauds had lost their patrimony to the Shammar house of Rashid; but in 1902 the young Abd al-Aziz

Ibn Saud recaptured the old Wahhabi capital of Riyadh, and by 1914, having greatly enlarged his family's patrimony, he emerged as one of the outstanding Arab personalities. His strong, autocratic yet paternalistic regime, while hardly consonant with modern democratic principles, proved most effective for an illiterate, backward desert society in which, as often as not, one tribe was pitted against another, all of them making it impossible for their country to attain either peace or a semblance of national unity. Into that unruly, heterogeneous society Ibn Saud introduced order, peace and a fair measure of unity. He even succeeded in settling some of the nomads permanently on the land and introducing a number of Western innovations.

In March 1924 Hussein of Mecca, who had meanwhile adopted the title of king, claimed the title of caliph, and Ibn Saud declared him a traitor, overran the Hijaz, drove out Hussein, annexed his lands and on January 8, 1926, proclaimed himself King of the Hijaz. He was equally victorious in 1934 in his brief conflict with the Imam Yahya of the Yemen. But by this time he had greater political experience and less was at stake for him in the Yemen than there had been in Hijaz, so at the end of the campaign he showed a moderation and magnanimity that greatly added to his prestige both in the Arab world and beyond its confines.

Saudi Arabia's emergence as a power to be reckoned with was not due, however, to the presence within it of Islam's two holy cities, Mecca and Medina, nor to the king's strong rule and courageous reforms and victories in the field; it was due to the discovery of oil. In 1936 the Standard Oil Co. of California struck oil at Dammam, and in 1944 the Arabian-American Oil Co., better known as Aramco, was founded. It consisted of Standard Oil of California, the Texas Co., Standard Oil of New Jersey and Socony Mobil Oil Co. The local oilfields proved to be some of the richest in the world, and in 1950 Aramco began transporting the oil from Dammam to Sidon in the Lebanon by a pipe-line 1,068 miles long. Half of the company's profits went to the king. This royalty provided more than 90 per cent of the country's revenue, while the balance came from the money spent by pilgrims streaming each year into Mecca and Medina. By the middle of the fifties the oil production figures reached almost 50 million tons per year.

When Ibn Saud died on November 9, 1953, aged 71, his eldest

son, Saud ibn Abdel Aziz, ascended the throne. By that time the country was infinitely richer and far bigger than it had been when his father set out to conquer his ancestral patrimony. Yet its centralized, autocratic structure was still more or less the same as it had been for many years. True enough there was now a Council of Ministers, each with his own department, but the enormous oil revenues were still regarded as the king's private property, and Saudi Arabia earned much hostile criticism on account of the lavish private expenditure incurred by the numerous members of the royal family. Arab defenders, however, would point out that the situation was inevitable: these were poor desert Bedouins suddenly finding themselves millionaires, and acting in the traditional manner of the *nouveaux riche*. Gradually, pressure of public opinion—not least the Arab world itself—and the impact of Aramco brought about certain reforms and improvements. Thus the army of royal princes received a (more or less) clearly defined salary; money was being spent on the building of a railway connecting Damman with Riyadh (eventually to be extended as far as Jidda); asphalted roads now link Jidda with Mecca and Medina; new towns are being erected near the old ones; in several rural centres electric generators have been installed; and the educational system has been greatly extended and modernized. Religious instruction is compulsory throughout the country; in the schools run by the state, education is free. In 1957 there were 500 such schools. The government also opened several schools for the training of future teachers, the existing body of teachers being almost entirely Egyptian.

During the first years of his reign King Saud appeared to be following the anti-Hashimite policy of his father, and to share the anti-Western outlook of Egypt and Syria; in 1957 he gave signs of a more conciliatory attitude toward both the West and the Hashimites. Early in that year he visited President Eisenhower in the United States of America, and he paid state visits to Baghdad and Amman, the capitals of the Hashimite kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan respectively. Unlike the rulers of Syria and Egypt, he did not adopt towards the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics a policy of benevolent neutrality, and established no embassies in any of the Communist countries. Without actually joining any of the Western defence pacts, he seemed to be inclining more towards the West than towards Moscow.

However, in March 1958, a wellnigh revolutionary event took place in Saudi Arabia. By passing the conduct of external, internal and financial affairs into the hands of his brother Prince Feisal, the king practically renounced his effective rulership. Prince Feisal was considered less favourably disposed towards the West, in greater sympathy with President Nasser and his policies, and more liberal-minded than was his elder brother. His sudden emergence as the true ruler of his country was hailed throughout the Arab world as a portent of greater unity within the Arab camp and of more liberal, not to say democratic tendencies within Saudi Arabia itself. But whatever its true significance, it must be assumed that the days of a medieval autocracy in Saudi Arabia are now numbered.

#### X THE YEMEN

The Yemen, on the south-west tip of the Arabian peninsula, though historically one of the oldest Arab countries, is among the least well known, except for one of its products, the famous coffee from Mocha. Even the penetration of the Ottomans never went very deep, and from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Yemen has remained practically independent. Adherents of the Shii Zaidi sect, the Yemenites have always been regarded by their fellow-Muslims as religiously obscurantist and somewhat fanatical. To the present day the country has retained a strictly religio-autocratic regime embodied in the person of their king, or imam, whom the people regard as both their secular and spiritual head, and whose power knows no constitutional restraints. Most of the members of the Council of Ministers—a recent innovation—are members of the royal family. Until the last few years the Yemen deliberately isolated itself from the outside world, and only a few foreign doctors and technicians were permitted to enter.

Economically still very much *terra incognita*, the Yemen derives the bulk of its revenues from the export of coffee, hides and skins. Yet the highlands of the Yemen contain some of the most fertile land in Arabia, and intensive though very primitive cultivation produces crops as varied as dates, rice, grapes, barley and almonds. Within the last few

years concessions were granted to two oil companies, but so far no oil has been discovered. The Imam's plans to introduce technical and economic innovations will obviously have to depend on foreign assistance. In fact an Italian economic mission has been invited to give advice on such innovations, and these are to include a hydro-electric station, a textile industry and a cement plant. At present, the Yemen has neither railways nor airfields, and there are few roads suitable for motor traffic. Though one or two relatively modern schools have been founded in recent years, most education is still of the traditional religious kind, concerned chiefly with the memorizing of the Koran and the study of Islamic law.

The Yemen's joining of the United Arab Republic, in March 1958, would seem to be of far less consequence than were most of the events that shook the Arab world at that moment.

## XI THE SHEIKHDOMS

While the main body of the Arabian Peninsula is occupied by Saudi Arabia, its outer fringe bordering on the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf is shared by a number of smaller states held by hereditary tribal chieftains. Even the names of these are unknown except to students of these regions, and even the better known have achieved their present prominence only within the last few years, a prominence that they owe to the discovery of oil within their territories. The one feature that these sheikhdoms share is that while nominally they are all independent, they have placed themselves under British protection in order to safeguard their independence and defence. Some of the treaties securing them British protection go back to the early years of the nineteenth century. Up to recent years British protection has ensured that earlier inter-tribal warfare should make room for a fair measure of peace and security. While in the past the peoples of those areas were concerned solely with their own tribal affairs, accepting their *status quo* unquestioningly, the recent awakening of Arab nationalism has not left them untouched. Its effects are taking various forms, among the most common of which are: opposition to Britain,

murmuring against their own rulers, demands for a Constitution or even for a federation of various states, and, above all, an increase in national and political consciousness. So far, however, no major political changes have taken place, and the traditional structure is still being maintained.

In geographical terms the sheikhdoms could be divided into those on the Persian Gulf, that is Kuwait, Bahrein, Qatar and the Trucial States, and those bordering the Arabian Sea, namely Muscat and Oman and the Aden Protectorate.

Next to Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the most important oil country is Kuwait, an independent sheikhdom under the protection of Great Britain. Only 20,000 square miles in extent, and with a population of a mere quarter of a million, Kuwait can claim to be one of the richest countries of the Middle East. This wealth is of very recent date, and is due to the presence of oil which is exploited by the Kuwait Oil Co., owned jointly by the British Petroleum Co. and the Gulf Oil Corporation of America. The company's oil concession runs till 2026. Within the matter of a few years Kuwait became the fourth largest oil-producing country in the world. By 1956 it was producing almost 60 million tons of oil per year.

In Kuwait power rests entirely in the hands of Sheikh Abdullah as Salim as Sabah, who succeeded his cousin in 1950. Though his regime might be described as autocratic, it is a benevolent and enlightened autocracy. Assisted by his British advisers, the ruler spends vast sums on general development plans of benefit to the population at large. Primary education is general and free. Modern low-cost housing has replaced the primitive hovels of the past. Up-to-date health services are available and free to all. One of Kuwait's pressing problems has always been the lack of water. Thanks to the country's new wealth, two large sea-water distillation plants have been erected which produce two million gallons of water per day. Moreover, the laying of a pipe-line is contemplated that will carry fresh water direct from the Shatt al Arab river in southern Iraq to Kuwait. Besides electric power stations, subsidiary building industries have been established for the production of lime and bricks. Metal roads have been built, and the harbour of Kuwait has been fitted out with modern shipyards. This vast programme of modernization is being put into effect by the

six-man High Executive Committee, established by the ruler in 1954 and acting as his advisory body.

The total area of the Bahrein island in the Persian Gulf is only 213 square miles and the population barely 150,000, about a quarter of whom live at Manama, the capital. Though the islands produce a fair amount of dates and lucerne and are famous for pearl-fishing, their chief source of income is oil, first found in 1932. Its concession-holders are the Bahrein Petroleum Co. owned by the Standard Oil Co. of California and the Texas Co. The annual production amounts to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million tons. Though compared with the Middle Eastern oil giants Bahrein may seem to be only small beer, its oil revenues have nevertheless enabled it to make rapid strides along the road to progress. Thus within the last few years more has been done for education, public health, transport and housing than had been accomplished during as many preceding centuries.

Like Kuwait, Bahrein is an independent but British-protected sheikhdom, governed by an hereditary native ruler, Sheikh Sulman bin Hamad al Khalifa, who is assisted by a Council of native administrators and British advisers. Britain is responsible for foreign affairs and for jurisdiction over certain classes of foreigners. Bahrein nationals, however, and those of most countries of the Middle East, are dealt with either in Sharia courts applying Islamic law or in courts presided over by members of the ruling family.

At the extreme south-east of the Arabian Peninsula lies the independent state of Muscat and Oman, governed more or less by an absolute native sultan residing in Muscat, the capital of Oman. A fairly extensive search for oil has so far proved fruitless. Economically the country is of small importance, but because of its geographical position and its proximity to the British Aden Protectorate, the Royal Air Force maintains several airfields at Oman.

The Aden Protectorate, stretching some 600 miles along the southern coast of Arabia, consists of twenty-three Arab states which after 1882 had placed themselves under the authority of the British Governor of Aden Colony. British protection was the main factor in bringing peace to a society of tribes who had previously spent most of the time at war with one another.



Aden Colony has been in British hands since 1839, since 1935 as a Crown Colony, presided over by a British governor, assisted by an Executive and Legislative Council. Though only 75 square miles in area, Aden Colony has assumed considerable importance on account of its harbour—the only good one between Egypt and India. Though almost entirely bereft of any natural resources, Aden is very active as a shipping and trading centre. Some 10,000 of its population are employed in the new oil refinery which produces annually 3 million tons of bunker fuel for ships calling at Aden.

Like Kuwait and Bahrein, Qatar and the Trucial States along the Persian Gulf are British-protected states. Qatar, ruled by a native sheikh, has only in quite recent years been awakened from its medieval condition by the influx of money paid for an oil concession. So far, however, oil has been found only in small quantities. Nevertheless, oil revenues have enabled the sheikhdom to introduce electricity and water distillation plants and to build a new harbour and roads.

The seven Trucial States occupy an area of about 30,000 square miles. Their 80,000 inhabitants are governed by autonomous native sheikhs, but foreign relations are a British responsibility. Royalties from oil concessions (which, so far, have not led to any worthwhile discovery of oil), and customs dues on imports provide the main revenues. Pearlising and fishing are among the traditional native occupations.

## XII THE ARAB 'PROBLEM'

More than any other single vexation it is the problem of Israel that has bedevilled relations between the Arabs and the West. For the Arabs it has become the focusing point for all the bitterness and acrimony engendered by what they regard as their betrayal by the West after World War I. At no time did the Arabs envisage the 'Jewish home in Palestine' in terms of a political state in the heart of what they consider their own lands. Even less did they expect that such a 'home' would become the focus of an international world-organization whose politics and ambitions they believed to be a permanent

threat to Arab interests. Even though originally they agreed reluctantly to the establishment of the Jewish 'home' in Palestine, they never ceased to regard this as a violation of Allied promises to themselves. The dividing up of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish part, and the establishment of the state of Israel, represented for them the culmination of episodes of that violation.

The Arabs who, being Semitic themselves, had lived peacefully together with their fellow-Semitic Jews, sympathized with the plight of the Jews escaping from Nazi savagery. Yet they failed to understand why they, one of the poorest communities, should have to bear the brunt of the West's humanitarian measures on behalf of the Jewish victims. In their assessment, the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, had not preached Jewish mass emigration to Palestine and the establishment of a political state. After the Arab-Israeli war, to the Arabs' earlier resentment was added the bitterness engendered by the fate of the hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees who had lost their homes and livelihood in the country in which they and their ancestors had lived for countless generations. Forgetting easily that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was among the first Great Powers to recognize the new state of Israel, they pinned most of the blame for the creation of that state on the United States of America. Because it was chiefly American money that enabled Israel to survive and to stand on its feet, the United States of America soon became the focus of their antagonism.

The main Arab opposition, however, was directed not so much towards the United States of America or to the state of Israel as such as towards international Zionism. For the Arabs credited that organization with the power to influence the Near Eastern policies of most foreign governments. They claimed that those policies would have been different had Zionist national groups not been in a position to affect them to the detriment of the Arabs. Even among the more moderate Arabs, prepared to accept the existence of Israel as a fact, most were afraid of the expansionist tendencies proclaimed by various Israeli parties and politicians.

In the emotional heat generated by the problem of Israel, many Arabs were wont to blame the West for most of their own difficulties. Though the West has often dealt with the Arabs in a selfish and short-sighted manner, and though no impartial observer could exonerate

the Western Powers from blame for their double-faced policies during and after World War I, it must nevertheless be admitted that the West was responsible for introducing conceptions of democracy, technological progress, social and hygienic reforms, and methods of modern and honest administration into the Near East. While under the Ottoman rule the Arabs were being exploited and, at the same time condemned to stagnate in ignorance, exploitation by the West often went hand-in-hand with at least some measure of instruction and progress. Whether this Western-type progress will ultimately prove of benefit to the Arabs it is impossible to say. Nevertheless the more experienced Arab admits that traditional tribal frictions, feudalism and the co-existence of great wealth accumulated in a few hands and the most piteous poverty, a rampant individualism that easily becomes licence, a religious obscurantism deliberately cultivated by those in power—that any and all of these represent weaknesses in the Arab system, and that the West could hardly be held responsible for their existence. He will likewise admit that the democratic concepts introduced by the West are closer to original Islamic tenets than was the feudal autocracy that had already gained ground in the days of the great Islamic Empire and that had become an accepted tradition under the Ottomans.

With the creation of the Arab League in 1945 hopes ran high that at last the Arabs would be able to bring about some sort of political unity and thus gain political strength. There were, however, too many dynastic, economic and personal divergencies within the League to permit of its becoming a truly effective instrument of Arab nationalism. It would, of course, be unfair to expect from the Arab League a greater measure of cohesion than was attained by either the League of Nations or the United Nations, within which even the bloc of Western democratic and Christian nations seldom was sufficiently united to speak with one voice. We only need to recall United Nations policies towards the problem of Red China, Cyprus, Algeria, the attack on Egypt in 1956 and, last but not least, the hydrogen bomb. Yet the member countries of the Western bloc were far more mature in political experience than those of the Arab League. These latter were little versed in modern democratic disciplines, and some of them were still benighted in a maze of medieval concepts. While the League may have achieved in the political sphere far less than had been hoped for, it

has brought into being some measure of cultural and economic unity among its members; this might otherwise have been delayed for years. The West's negative assessment of the League's achievements has usually been based on a fundamental misconception, a pretence that the League claims to be some kind of federal government determining the policies of all the Arab countries. Such claims were never made by the League. A united federal (or similar) government is as distant a project for the Arab countries as it is for those of the continent of Europe or the Spanish-speaking countries of South America. Because the Arab peoples share the same language and the same historic cultural background, it does not necessarily follow that they represent a more closely knit group than do all the Latin or all the Germanic countries of Europe. Yet the gulf that separates one Arab nation from another is probably much more easily bridgeable than that between the Germans and the Dutch, the Poles and the Russians, the French and the Spanish.

To the Arabs, political unity—whatever its ultimate form—is a very powerful magnet. Many of them, both men and women, are already working towards its fulfilment. Their goal is one, even though the means by which they are trying to attain it may differ. Some of these means are political, others social, cultural or economic. Arab unity obviously cannot precede the solution of the countless problems that individual Arab nations are now facing. It can only follow upon it. And it can only come when the weaknesses accumulated during the long years of subjection and isolation from the rest of the world have been overcome, that is, when the gap between rich and poor, traditionalist and progressive, man and woman, town-dweller and countryman has narrowed down. Only then will Arab democracy cease to be a mere label and acquire true substance.

The West has suffered not identical but very similar dichotomies within its political and social fabric, and it took the West several hundred years to resolve them. Though the rhythm of present Arab progress is much faster, inevitably several generations will come and go before the Near East has achieved the requisite balance. It is something of a miracle that, after hundreds of years of foreign rule and persecution, the Arabs should have survived at all as a national and cultural entity. That survival alone suggests that they are possessed of an exceptional tenacity and vitality.

It would be unwise to equate progress and democracy in Arab lands with Western-type democracy or with the 'American way of life'. Their basic problems and their historic background differ from ours, and their solutions, too, will have to be different. The merger of Egypt and Syria, on the one hand, and Iraq and Jordan, on the other, has come about much more rapidly than anything corresponding either in Europe or in South America. Neither of these mergers may prove a complete success, and the Arab world may yet find itself torn by frictions and tensions. But it has proved already that it is resolved to set its house in order in its own way—neither a British, American nor Russian way. What the Arabs feel in need of more, even, than the best reforms is that the outside world should cease to treat their lands as a chessboard for its own power politics, strategic considerations and economic competitions. Once that world permits them to attain this aim, there is no reason why they should not become a centre of peace rather than of unrest and why they should not again make their specific and positive contribution to world civilization.

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CHRONOLOGY OF THE MODERN ARAB WORLD

*Egypt*

Area 386,000 square miles. Population 23,000,000.

- 1798 Napoleon invades Egypt.
- 1810 Muhammad Ali gains complete control of Egypt.
- 1869 Suez Canal completed.
- 1875 England purchases Egypt's share of the Canal.
- 1882 Following Egyptian revolt against the Ottomans, England occupies the country.
- 1883-1907 Lord Cromer controls Egypt as British Consul-General.
- 1911 Lord Kitchener becomes British Agent in Egypt.
- 1914 Egypt becomes a British protectorate.
- 1918 Zaghlul Pasha forms the *Wafd* (Delegation) party in an attempt to secure freedom for Egypt.
- 1922 Fuad is proclaimed King of Egypt. Britain recognizes its limited independence.
- 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty. English troops limited to Canal Zone. Farouk becomes king.
- 1937 Egypt joins the League of Nations.
- 1952 Military revolt forces Farouk's abdication.
- 1953 June Neguib becomes Premier and President.
- 1953 November Nasser deposes Neguib and assumes leadership.
- 1955 September Russia exchanges Egyptian cotton for Communist arms.
- 1956 June The last of the British troops leave.
- 1956 July Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal.
- 1956 October Israel-Anglo-French troops invade Egypt.
- 1956 November U.N. troops enter Egypt.
- 1956 December Anglo-French troops withdraw.
- 1957 Egypt and Syria represent the anti-West element in the Arab League.
- 1958 February Egypt and Syria form the United Arab Republic.

*Iraq*

Area 176,000 square miles. Population 5,500,000.

- 1914 British troops invade Iraq to thwart Central Powers.
- 1918-1920 British military administration controls country.
- 1920 British receive mandate of Iraq at Conference of San Remo.
- 1921 Faisal ibn Hussein becomes King of Iraq.
- 1922 Anglo-Iraqi treaty guarantees special rights for England.
- 1924 Parliament elected.
- 1932 Iraq enters the League of Nations. British mandate ends.
- 1941 Al-Gaylani announces pro-German regime.
- 1941 British troops occupy Iraq.
- 1943 Iraq declares war on the Axis Powers.
- 1945 Iraq signs Charter of the United Nations.
- 1950 Economic Development Plan begins.
- 1955 Iraq joins Baghdad Pact.

## PROBLEMS OF THE PRESENT ARAB WORLD

### *Iraq*

- 1955-1960      Five-year development plan.
- 1958 February      Iraq and Jordan form the Federated Arab States.

### *Jordan*

- Area 37,500 square miles. Population 1,500,000.
- 1921      Cairo Conference establishes Transjordan as an Arab State under British guidance.
- 1923      Abdallah ibn Hussein becomes Amir of Transjordan. Arab Legion formed by Peake Pasha.
- 1928      Transjordan formulates a Constitution.
- 1945      Transjordan joins the Arab League.
- 1946      Treaty of London gives the country legal independence if not actual freedom. Abdallah becomes king.
- 1949      Name changes to Jordan.
- 1950      Jordan annexes eastern Palestine.
- 1951      Abdallah is assassinated and his son Talal takes throne.
- 1953      Talal abdicates and is replaced by Hussein.
- 1956      Glubb Pasha is replaced as head of the Arab Legion. Jordan severs ties with Great Britain.
- 1957      King Hussein accepts United States aid. Reconciliation between Jordan and Saudi Arabia.
- 1958 February      Jordan joins Iraq in forming the Federated Arab States.

### *The Lebanon*

- Area 4,000 square miles. Population 1,425,000.
- 1864      France imposes 'Organic Statute' on Ottomans forcing them to provide a Christian governor for the Lebanon.
- 1866      American University founded.
- 1918      Lebanon occupied by the Allies.
- 1920      France assumes mandate over the Lebanon and creates Greater Lebanon—Tyre, Sidon and Tripoli.
- 1920-1936      Legal self-government granted but France still in control.
- 1936      Franco-Lebanese treaty of independence signed but not ratified.
- 1941      Lebanon proclaimed free by General Catroux.
- 1943      France refuses to implement independence. The Lebanon's government is dissolved.
- 1946      U.S.-British pressure forces France to leave the Lebanon.
- 1957      The Lebanon supports the Eisenhower doctrine.

### *Libya*

- Area 680,000 square miles. Population 1,100,000.
- 1911      Italy declares war on Turkey and attacks Libya.
- 1912      Italy occupies Libya.
- 1912-1918      Sanussi rebellion against Italy.
- 1918-1925      Uneasy peace between Libyans and Italians.
- 1925-1931      Fascists finally are successful in eliminating native rule.
- 1942      War in Libya between Montgomery's British troops and Rommel's Germans.
- 1942      Cyrenaica and Tripolitania occupied by the British. Fezzan controlled by the French.

## ISLAM AND THE ARABS

### *Libya*

- 1942-1950      Libya is supported and administered by the British and the French.
- 1951, Dec. 24   U.N. declares the country a United Kingdom with a Federal government.
- 1952            Libya holds its first elections.
- 1953            Great Britain-Libyan treaty gives latter financial aid in return for air bases.
- 1954            United States receives air bases.
- 1955            Libya is admitted to the United Nations.
- 1955            French remove last troops from Libya.

### *Palestine*

Area 10,429 square miles (prior to 1947). Population 1,900,000 (1947).

- 1914            Turkish rulers of Palestine join the Central Powers and British Army attacks.
- 1917 September   Liberation of Jerusalem by Great Britain.
- 1918-1920       British military forces administer Palestine.
- 1920            League of Nations proclaim British Mandate over Palestine.
- 1929            Jewish Agency is established to implement Zionist aims.
- 1933-1936       Arab rebellion in opposition to Jewish immigration.
- 1939            British issue White Paper to halt Jewish immigration. Illegal immigration begins.
- 1939-1945       Palestinian Arabs and Jews aid Britain during the war.
- 1945            Jewish rebellion against the British.
- 1946-1948       Arab-Jewish reign of terror.
- 1948 May 15      Independent state of Israel established.
- 1948            Israeli-Arab war follows independence.

### *Saudi Arabia*

Area 930,000 square miles. Population 7,000,000.

- 1902            Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud captures Riyadh.
- 1902-1914       Ibn Saud consolidates control of central Arabia.
- 1921            Ibn Saud becomes overlord of Hail, Shammar and Jawf.
- 1924            Mecca and major portion of Arabia come under Ibn Saud's control.
- 1926            Ibn Saud proclaims himself King of the Hijaz.
- 1927            Britain recognizes this title by Treaty of Jidda.
- 1933            Standard Oil of California receives oil concession.
- 1934            Ibn Saud defeats the Yemen but annexes no territory.
- 1938            Oil in large quantities discovered at Dammam.
- 1944            Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco) formed.
- 1945            Saudi Arabia joins Arab League as a charter member.
- 1953            Ibn Saud dies and is succeeded by his son Saud.
- 1955            Mutual defence pact signed with Egypt and Syria.
- 1957            Saudi Arabia supports Eisenhower Doctrine. Reconciliation between King Saud and the Hashimite rulers of Iraq and Jordan.
- 1958 March      King Saud passes on most of his powers to his brother Feisal.



## PROBLEMS OF THE PRESENT ARAB WORLD

### *Syria*

Area 72,000 square miles. Population 3,800,000.

- 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement gives France a free hand in Syria.
- 1920 March Kingdom of Greater Syria (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria) proclaimed by nationalists. Feisal becomes king.
- 1920 April Conference of San Remo gives mandate of Syria to France.
- 1925-1926 Syrians revolt against France. Damascus is shelled twice.
- 1928 Constitution is adopted but France refuses to ratify.
- 1930 France dissolves Syrian assembly.
- 1934 Syrian legislature is suspended indefinitely.
- 1936 Franco-Syrian treaty of independence signed but not ratified by France.
- 1939 Alexandretta is ceded to Turkey by France.
- 1941 Vichy France controls Syria.
- 1941 June Allies occupy Syria.
- 1943 Shukri Kuwatly wins presidential election.
- 1945 Britain and the United States force France's withdrawal.
- 1946 April Syria achieves full independence.
- 1949 Syria and the Lebanon link their monetary systems.
- 1955 Joint Syrian-Egyptian military command is established.
- 1956 Syria concludes barter agreement with Communist countries.
- 1958, February 1 Syria becomes part of United Arab Republic.

### *Aden*

Area 75 square miles. Population 138,000.

Aden became a British colony in 1839. Behind Aden and stretching 600 miles along the coast is an area of some twenty-three Arab states which make up the Aden Protectorate. This British protectorate covers an area of 112,000 square miles and has an approximate population of 750,000.

### *Bahrain*

Area 213 square miles. Population 125,000.

This island is ruled by a sheikh assisted by a Council of Administration. Bahrain is linked to Great Britain by several commercial and political treaties. Oil was first discovered in 1932 and the concession is held by the Bahrain Petroleum Company, an American firm.

### *Kuwait*

Area 20,000 square miles. Population 250,000.

Kuwait is an independent sheikhdom protected by Great Britain. Oil was first exported in 1946 although discovered earlier. Kuwait is now the world's fourth largest oil producer.

### *Muscat and Oman*

Area 82,000 square miles. Population 550,000.

Muscat and Oman is an independent state protected by Great Britain. Its ruler is a sultan with absolute powers over his own subjects.

## ISLAM AND THE ARABS

### *Yemen*

Area 75,000 square miles. Population 5,000,000.

Yemen is an independent monarchy. Its king, or imam, is both spiritual and temporal leader. Some of the best agricultural land in Arabia is found in the Yemen. Coffee is its most valuable cash crop.

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